NO. 2

$2.95

PANELS

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CARL BARKS
TALKS
ABOUT DUCKS

PAGES OF
BARKS ART
FROM BEFORE
AND AFTER
DISNEY

JESSE MARSH
REMEMBERED
BY
ALEX TOTH

IS WAR HELL?
HARVEY
KURTZMAN'S
WAR TALES
ANALYZED

If all comics were simplisticly divided into those about humans and those about animals, Carl Barks' work would have to fall into the latter category. His stories were about funny squat little ducks that walked around half-naked in a world otherwise populated by fully clothed full-sized people with vague animal attributes. But Barks' ducks are complex and fully realized characters—they are, in fact, more "human" than all but a handful of the characters with human physiognomy that have appeared in comics.

During Barks' career, most comic books were designed to appeal to adolescents or adults, but undeniably the vast majority of that material was extremely juvenile. The particular genre that Barks worked in was frankly designed for young children, yet his work has that rare maturity which places it in the select small body of art that can delight intelligent readers of all ages.

Though Barks' draftsmanship is more than superior, his work never drew attention to it. He never used flashly narrative gimmicks to advance his stories, simply because his stories were so good, so rich, that his unhurried straightforward method of presentation was all that was necessary. But to dwell too much on matters of technique when discussing Barks' work is to miss the point. *Of course* the deceptively simple nature of his technique is a key feature of his work. But the truest and finest art defies simple and schematic explanations. The stature of Barks' work stems from his observation of human characters, which he revealed in a thousand dramatic and humorously satiric ways. The essence of his work was described perfectly in a letter that he received from an Italian reader named Antonio Conti in 1968:

"We are two Italians, twentyfive years old, and we admire you and yours Donald Duck: since when we were children, as well as many others, we followed Donald Duck, published also in Italy. But only for some time, reading again, at first by chance, those fables, we discovered in Donald Duck which you drowed, something particular, so real, so alive, impossible to describe with worlds, and so much the worse with our bed English.

"Into your tales, a perstistence presence of humanity always moves us. To say with few marks, with extreme semplicity those big and small truths which many don't communicate with many words, to penetrate and to be accessible to the everybody spirit, to bring its essence until the roots of intellect; this is the reason the truest and the most immediate of Art, and we tell you this rare merit.

"We therefore gather, knowing to collect small master pieces, the stories of your characters, and we are unfortunatly sorry that we will never to able to have your former works, which are impossible to find in Italy, but we are mostly sorry because perhaps, we will never can to meet you."

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In this issue, *Panels* presents the first look at a new series of watercolors by Carl Barks called "Famous Figures of History as They Might Have Looked Had Their Genes Gotten Mixed Up with Waterfowl." The cover shows "Long, Ben, Arch Pirate," who preyed on shipping in the Indian Ocean. Inside the book you will find "Hiawatha" and "Buffalo Bill Cooty." Limited edition signed prints of other Barks "Waterfowl" paintings are available from Bruce Hamilton, Box 998, Scottsdale, Arizona 85252.

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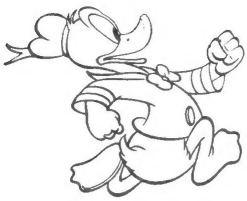
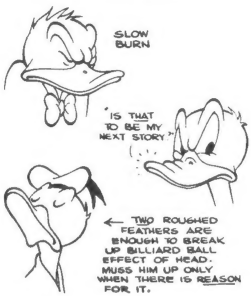


UNLIKE ANIMATION DUCKS, COMIC STRIP DUCKS CAN RUN LIKE HUMAN BEINGS.


SLOW BURN
'IS THAT TO BE MY NEXT STORY?'
← TWO ROUGHED FEATHERS ARE ENOUGH TO BREAK UP BILLIARD BALL EFFECT OF HEAD. MUSS HIM UP ONLY WHEN THERE IS REASON FOR IT.

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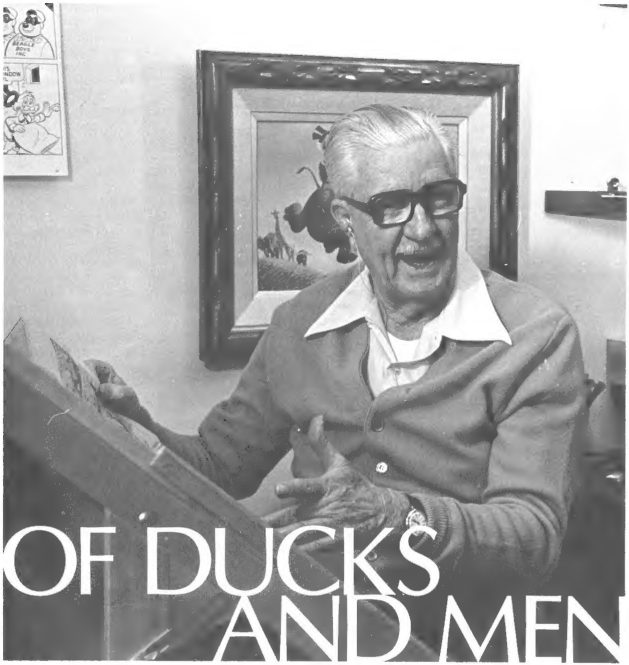

Photo: Michael Sullivan © 1981 Edward Summer

OF DUCKS AND MEN

CARL BARKS Interviewed By EDWARD SUMMER

How I came to be a cartoonist is as much a mystery to me as it would be to anybody else. I have no cartoonists in my ancestral tree whatsoever, no artists that I know of, no writers that I know of; I was just a sort of a mutant that came along and I was born up in eastern Oregon on a little homestead. My parents had no cultural background, no education much, and I got through the eighth grade in a little one-room schoolhouse, no art training whatever, but I did have a desire to be a cartoonist. And I would draw pictures with charcoal on the walls of any kind of a building I happened to be in, and I would scrawl all over my schoolbooks and we had slates in those days. Imagine that—slates, those squeaky things. And I would draw on those slates and any kind of paper I could find.

By the time I was 16, I had become pretty well assured that I wanted to be an artist or cartoonist more than I wanted to be a farmer. But, I lacked the opportunities to meet with people with the same sort of ideas, and I had to go out and be a cowhand and a farmer, a muleskinner, lumberjack, anything that happened to come along that would furnish me with a living. I'd worked in a printing shop, been a cowboy and a whole bunch of other things, with practically no success whatever—I was a failure at all of those enterprises. In 1928 I was working at riveting, not as a riveter, but as a rivet heater on a riveting gang in railroad car shops, when I decided I could sell cartoons to the comic books. Not comic books, but comic magazines, like *Whiz-Bang* and those old joke magazines. And so I drew a few cartoons. Surprisingly, they sold, and I discovered that I had to write jokes to fit the cartoons so I could sell more cartoons, and that way I got to writing one-line gags and illustrating them and selling them and even sold a couple to *Judge*, which was the real good joke magazine in those days. And, I even think I had one published in *College Humor*. I can't recall for sure now. I was doing that, and then I got a chance to go on the staff of *Calgary Eye-Opener* back in Minneapolis. I went there and worked four years.

But the wages were getting smaller by the hour, and I read in the paper that Walt Disney's was looking for cartoonists, and I

had been making a living as a cartoonist, so I drew up a few samples and sent them out there. This was along about October of 1935. And I quite soon got an answer back from George Drake, who was the hiring guy there at Disney's, and he suggested that I come and try out. Twenty dollars a week. So I did it. I quit my job at the *Eye-Opener*, and I went out there on a wild gamble that I could make it. I started working with the in-betweeners. I think that the first in-betweens I did were on the shorts.

Was there a particular animator that you worked with?

No. The in-betweeners who were in training, they just took whatever odd jobs that happened to be lying around, and something that wasn't extremely important to the movie. They would turn us in-betweeners loose on that while we were training. Now, an animator would have an assistant and maybe a couple of in-betweeners—that would be a basic unit. So that was where the in-betweeners would go once they had gone through that period of training. Well, before I had finished the period of training, I was put over into the story department. In fact, I don't think I would ever have finished the period of training before I got fired, but I turned in so many gags to the comic strip department and also to the story department whenever they would ask for some gag assistance from the hoi polloi around the place, to pick up a little extra money, that I got put in the story department on a permanent basis.

Was drawing comics a lot more personally satisfying than working in animation?

Oh, Lord, yes. I couldn't have ever been an animator. It would have been too monotonous for me. The comic books were a tremendous field for presenting ideas and all kinds of activity and background. There's a wide range to the artwork that goes into comic books. In animation you just draw on a little bit of a character repeatedly over and over for days at a time. You get no background. Just a lighted glass under your characters. Oh, that'd be terrible!

How did you get into doing comics?

My first comic book work was in *Donald Duck Finds Pirate Gold* in 1942, when I was still working in the story department at the studio. That comic was the first of the Donald Duck long-lengths and was an adaption of an animation story that had been shelved. I did part of the drawing only—the other pages were by Jack Hannah.Bob Karp did the script from a story that was plotted and gagged up in its original storyboard form by Homer Brightman and Harry Reeves. The grind was terrific at the studio, and my sinuses couldn't take the air conditioning. So I took a chance and quit Disney, and soon started writing and drawing full time for Whitman Publishing Company, which is the branch of Western Printing and Litho that published the comics. Luckily I caught on quick.

I have no inside dope on how Western decided to start using original ten page Donald Duck stories in *Walt Disney's Comics*. Obviously they were running out of newspaper strip reprints and needed some original stuff to fill the book. I didn't know they planned the strip at the time I left Disney's. They sent me a ready-written script to draw for story #1, the crow story, several weeks after I left the studio. Maybe the fact that I was available caused them to send the work to me. Otherwise it would have gone to some other artist. I noticed some bad errors in the plot, and wrote the editor for permission to change things around. The result was that they invited me to see if I could do a whole original story myself. The story of the kids and their "rabbit foot" was the result. I used an animated cartoon approach to story plotting in my early comic books because that approach had become second nature after seven years in the studio story department.

I ordinarily worked on only one story at a time. I never could comfortably mix them up or start a new one while one was still unfinished. The stories were a continuous chain-of-thought thing with me. They grew and were subject to change right up to the inking of the last panel. Besides, I liked a little mental rest after finishing a story.

Could you talk a bit about how your comics version of Donald differed from the screen version?

While working in the story department on the duck I had become quite familiar with his character as we had it in the animated cartoons. When I got to "own" the story, I was pretty much on my own. Oh, I broadened his character out very much. Instead of making just a quarrelsome little guy out of him, I made a sympathetic character. He was sometimes a villain, and he was often a real good guy and at all times he was just a blundering person like the average human being, and I think that is one of the reasons people like the duck.

What about the nephews—how they related to Donald and how they treated him . . .

The nephews are also a holdover from the animation days and in the studio we used to have them just mischievous little guys that were always in conflict with Donald. Now when I used them in the comic books, I found that was too limited a field, so I began making them into sort of smart little guys once in a while, and very clumsy little guys at other times, and always, I aimed at surprise in each story so that nobody could pick up a comic book and say, "Well, the nephews are going to behave thus and so." They wouldn't know until they had read the story just what those little guys were going to be up to in a particular sequence. So I broadened them like I did Donald, started out with some mischievous little guys and ended up with little scientists, you might say. They were hard to draw, too, believe me.

What are the differences between your ducks and human beings?

I guess I was confused on that. I'm afraid that there were times when I kept thinking of those ducks as human beings and treating them as human beings, and I even reached a point in the story, the first issue of *Uncle Scrooge*, I called him "Only a Poor Old Man." I didn't call him a poor old duck. So, I guess I always felt they were human beings, just humans with ducks' bodies. All their problems were the same as humans had. I guess that I humanized them.

Does anyone know where Donald's nephews came from?

Well, they came from three eggs. That's as basic as anybody can get with them. I was working on the story unit at Disneys when they were brought in. In that old original seven minute short, if they ever show it now, I think it shows, in the beginning, Donald reading this note that comes with the kids saying that his sister's going away for a trip or something, and she's asked if he will take care of three lovely little boys while she's gone. And I guess she never came back [laughs].

How did you come up with the idea for Uncle Scrooge?

I had to get a Christmas story going, and somehow a person just automatically goes back to the old Dickens Scrooge story, the old classic, 'cause part of the things that go along with Christmas, like the ringing of bells and singing of carols and so on, is the repetition of the old Scrooge classic. So I got to thinking of an old rich uncle, and gradually the story just kept building. Donald would have to get into a situation where I could use this rich uncle. And the kids naturally wanted Christmas trees, and they wanted snow, and the different things that go along with Christmas. So all the elements were there, and I just started hooking them together automatically. Now, I can't say where these things come from. I have a situation that has to be solved, and somehow all the parts just commence coming into my head from someplace and I just fit them together, and pretty soon I had fitted together a story of the ducks getting permission from their rich uncle to go up on Bear Mountain and use his cabin overnight. Well, that, of course, meant that the rich uncle had to have a reason for doing that, so I brought in this thought that he wanted to know whether Donald was a real brave duck, and that led to the bear, and the situation of testing Donald's courage. That's the way those stories build. I have a bunch of things that have to go into a story, and so I just keep feeling around for the best gags that fit in. It's like sewing together pieces of a shirt.

The construction of a story always started with the inspiration of a funny situation that the ducks could get into. Then I would start thinking of gags that would apply to that situation and, oh, I would pick up a piece of paper and just start writing on it, write

Hiawatha. Copyright © 1981 Carl Barks

down all kinds of little gags that I would think of. Even at night I would wake up and grab a piece of paper and note something down that I would happen to think of during the night that would apply to that particular story. After I had quite a few gags put together and I felt that I had enough to really make a story interesting, then I would put them all together in a sort of sequence so that I could write a synopsis, with a beginning, middle and end. This would be, oh, two pages of just longhand, sort of an outline. Then, with that pretty well polished, I would start breaking it down into panels. That is, write in longhand what the ducks were doing in each one, and write the amount of dialogue that each one would have to say, and go on from panel to panel until I had detailed the business of a whole page, and then I would start on the next page. And, in fact, that's when the gags really begin to pop into the story—when I'm breaking it down into panels. I would just begin thinking of all kinds of different new things. Because each panel would suggest something that might happen in the panel just a little later, or a page or two later. Pretty soon I would have a running gag developed. Sometimes I would start with a story that I felt would come out 16 pages long, and I would find that it was actually going to be about 20.

Now, one of the main things in the construction of a story is the planting of gags, objects that are going to be used later in the story. For instance, in one story I had the nephews have an animal whistle that would call all sorts of animals, that I was going to use for some big climax later in the story. I planted that whistle early in the story. The kids would be blowing the whistle, and here would come a bunch of little animals. It showed what the whistle was for, and the reader could anticipate that it was going to be used sometime later. I remember when I worked in the

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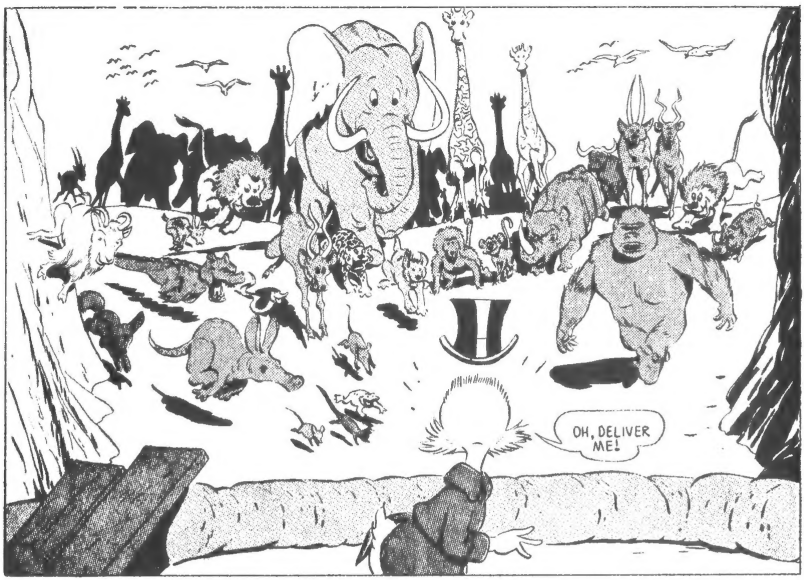


story department down at Disney's, they had an analysis one time of what it is that makes a story plausible. And one rule was that whenever you're going to have some event happen, don't just drag it in and have it happen. Plant it ahead. Plant it twice. If you're going to have a character pick up a gun and shoot somebody later in the movie,—of course, nobody ever did that in Disney movies, that's just an example—plant that gun twice before he ever handles it, somewhere earlier in the story. Show it in a drawer, anything.

After I had the story laid out page by page, I would go back to the beginning and plan the drawing of each panel, and rough out with light blue pencil where the characters should go. Each panel had to be composed so that the characters were centralized in as tight a little group as I could get them, and so that whatever they were doing was very clear to the reader. Then I would letter in the final dialogue, just in blue pencil, and once I had the whole page all constructed that way in rough, then I would go back and ink these characters. I would ink each one starting with the head usually, and going down to all the different details of the body. And then I would hand the page over to my wife, who would do the lettering and ink in all the background details. She'd ink in all those things. And she would put in the solid blacks—in the duck's jacket, and the eyeballs, and so on. And then she would hand it back to me for whatever finishing was required, like putting the little white dashes in the ducks' eyes, the highlights that showed what direction they were looking.

What were the stages in drawing the art?

I usually draw the head first, which establishes the size of the characters, and then I draw an action line. [*He uses an example to illustrate.*] In a pose like this, the head and the torso is stretched out. The action calls for them to be stretched out much longer than they naturally would be. Their hats have to react—they fly off of their heads. Their coattails have to fly back in the air. In other words, every part of the ducks and their clothing has to show some bit of the action. It has to flow with the action. And their eagerness as they think they're going to land in a big lake full of water must show, too, in their expressions.

Do you ever skip the preliminary process and just go direct without drawing the circles?

Not very much. It's very much better to draw the circles, because then you get the construction, the basic construction of the guy—like the skeleton, in other words. In the next stage their expressions have to be refined, which is done mostly with patient redrawing and erasing. When I'm drawing the faces I think about what their basic emotion is, what they are doing there. These little guys are really happy, they think they have seen a lake of water out in this desert, so I try to show that emotion in their faces and in their poses, their eagerness as they look out across the sand and think they see this lake. They really lean into it. Even their fingers have to express a certain amount of emotion.

In drawing the duck's faces, I used to act out the expressions on my own face, all unconsciously. If I had the ducks angry, I would strain myself to draw their anger and get the feeling so much that I was grimacing, and if I had them scared, which they were so much of the time, or popeyed, I would draw that with my eyes wide open and practically imitating the ducks' expressions, except that I didn't have a beak. And the result was that I would end up with a headache, because when you look at those ducks they have big round eyes, and somehow I was trying to imitate that, and my physical eyelids just couldn't make it. And my jaws would get so tired from going up and down like that all day long,

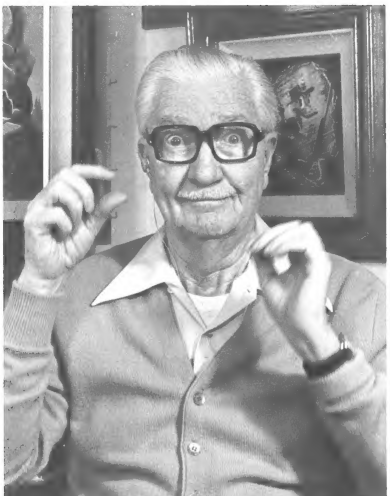


Photo: Michael Sullivan © 1981 Edward Summer

grimacing, making frowns, my forehead would be all kinked up. I would really be tired when the day's work was done. Oh, it was work.

When you were doing the dialogue, how did you work the words out to fit in the panels?

I tried to make it as brief as possible. If I could find a word that would express what four words say, I would use that one word. So I had a sort of short, very crisp dialogue in my stories as a result of that contracting them down. And, in order to get dialogue as short as possible, sometimes it was necessary to even count the syllables, and I would do that if it got down to it, and that also helped to create an even flow, so that it was almost like prose poetry the way the ducks voices would come in.

How about the color?

The color was done at Poughkeepsie, New York at the printing plant. I guess they had a color planner and then a bunch of girls who did the overlays. If I had to put any particular color into a panel I would specify alongside the edge of the panel, like "Make desert yellow." Most likely, when the book came out, the desert would be bright red. That happened too often to be funny, so I avoided doing that kind of gag—anything that required a specific color. I felt there was no use getting into those troubles to start with.

What about the covers?

I never had any way of indicating what the color was going to be there either. That was all done back east.

Do you have any stories that are your personal favorites?

I've always liked certain ones—that is, they come to mind very quickly. However, I will go and read some of my old stories and surprisingly I find a lot of them that I like. I like them because the ideas appealed to me in the first place and because I was able to build them as I wanted to build them—I never got any interference from the company. I have a kind of an affinity for certain stories. I rather liked them—but I wouldn't say that I'd be fanatic about them.

Which ones come to mind?

Well, the first one is the square egg story ["Lost in the Andes"]—as a *technical* story. Technically it was a good one. The way the gags were all laced together and there were two or three running gags that ran throughout and repeated every once in a while, like the bubble gum with the kids. And square objects, of course. Another one that I liked, principally because of its sentimental quality, was "In Old California." I think I got a kind of a musical tone to my dialogue in the writing, which I was almost playing Spanish music to.

It's an uncommon story compared to the other ones, because not really that much happens, but it builds an incredible mood. There's the realism of the background—so many of the details in the story are drawn from life—and that makes everything so much more credible. In fact, realism is one of your hallmarks—even if you have a bunch of sight gags, something close to slapstick, it's firmly rooted in reality.

Yes. I tried to always tie my stories in to the locale. It had to be grounded right on the earth of that particular scene. That is, if you're going to be in the Andes, it had to look like the Andes, and the gags had to be affected by whatever the atmosphere would be around the Andes, the ways of the people, and they ways of nature and the terrain, everything had an effect on the gags and dictated the type of gags that I would use. And so it was with "Old California." Those gags were dictated by the story's plot, its locale, the year that it was supposed to have been taking place in, and the type of people who lived in old California. All those things entered into the making up of the gags and plotting of the story.

How did you research the stories?

I would research them by going to any source that might have information about the locale or the type of business the ducks were going to be engaged in. If it were about mining, I would try to find a little technical stuff about mining, about how gold looks, where it is found, and then I would take the National Geographics and look through them for all the different locales, the way the mountains were constructed, the way the terrain looked, the way the people dressed in that area. All those things had to go into the researching of a story. And, of course I always kept a big bunch of clippings, drawers full of clippings that I clipped out of the papers, of locales, or different types of animals, machinery, war equipment . . .

With your interest in the way things work . . .do you enjoy science?

Oh, I guess I do. I know my choice of magazines is always things that deal with mechanics and scientific things. I don't have time to read much, but I do read *Popular Science* and whenever I buy a specialty magazine it's something about some phase of science, or automobiles, or mechanics, or power saws or something.

Do you read Scientific American*?*

I used to take it. And I'm sorry I dropped the subscription at the time we moved. I had taken it for years. And I *couldn't* throw them away—I always liked to go back and dig through them. But it was such a heavy magazine and I was beginning to get tons of the things around, so when we moved up here I just had to abandon them all, and I just didn't subscribe to it again, because my *National Geographic* was about all I could find room to store. That's one of my favorite magazines, *Scientific American*.

What are some of the other stories that you're particularly fond of?

Well, I liked "Land of the Totem Poles," and also the forest fire story in the 1950 25¢ Vacation Annual. And the first issue of *Uncle Scrooge*. Of the ten pagers in *Comics and Stories*, I think the March 1951 story about the cyclone distributing Uncle Scrooge's wealth is the best. I also liked the story about Uncle Scrooge's search for the horseradish down under the sea in the sunken ship. That gave me a chance to show his character—where he was up against a situation where he could dissolve all of his troubles by just leaving a guy to drown out there in the ocean, but he perpetuated his troubles by rescuing the guy and saving his

Buffalo Bill Coody. Copyright © 1981 Carl Barks

life. It gave me a chance too, to show that villains don't reform just because you do them a favor. They don't turn around and do you a favor in return. They remain villains right through to the end.

One of my favorite stories is the one about the micro-ducks from outer space [Uncle Scrooge #65]*, because it also showed Uncle Scrooge's integrity. There's that marvelous scene where he weighs out each grain of corn and takes that much money.*

I liked that story myself. I felt that I had touched on something that was a little different than just about any other space-type story that's come around. Creatures from outer space are villainous characters usually, and they have not rung a bell with me because I have felt that out in outer space there are good people as well as bad, and here on earth there are good people as well as bad, so in that story I did a little preaching, I guess. Those micro-ducks were implausable little fellows, but for all we know, in outer space there are little planets no bigger than walnuts completely populated with people like us. Anyway, they are good little guys, they come down here just trying to strike a bargain to buy some corn and they happen to meet up with Uncle Scroge, who in this story was scrupulously honest. Well, he *usually* is honest; I play on that in most of his stories, that he is honest. He's just driven to the wall a few times by people who are dishonest. So I used him as being representative of the better type of people we have on earth, the people who believe in doing the square deal by their fellow man or their fellow creatures, wherever they come from. And I felt the honesty of old Uncle Scrooge spoke well for the earth people.

You know, other writers have done stories using the character, and many times they change him. I read one story where Scrooge is very greedy and he's fighting with somebody over a dime on the sidewalk, which doesn't seem quite the right thing for him to do. He always worked very hard to get his money.

Well, he would squabble with Donald, for instance, over a dime, so I guess he would squabble with another person over a dime, too. But he wouldn't fight unfairly, he would...or would

he? I don't know [*laughs*]. I've never had him in that situation and I [*laughs*], I always let the situation dictate what Uncle Scrooge would have to do under the circumstances.

Of course, that micro-duck story is something that I just grasped out of thin air—it's a fable, you might say. It's not based on anything on earth as we know it now.

There's a certain fable-like quality to many of your stories. Did you ever consciously try to work in the format of a fable?

I wouldn't know whether I was or not. I'm not familiar enough with the construction of fables to know how they were put together. The few fables that I have read, that is, condensations of the Aesop's fables, have been in children's books, where they were only two or three paragraphs long. I'm certainly no expert on fables.

When you were a child, were there any storytellers that you particularly liked?

Oh, I remember Old Mother West Wind, and the little foxes and the rabbits that lived out in the meadow. These were a little section in the children's pages of a newspaper. Now, who wrote them? It wasn't Harrison Cady or any name like that—they weren't illustrated very much except just one little black and white drawing. But that was about the limit of the children's type of reading that I ever did. Then, as I grew older, I graduated to the western pulps, and so on. Now, I have never read *Treasure Island*, or any of the children's classics. I've only read one story by Mark Twain that I know of.

Did you used to like to go to the movies?

Yes, but I had very little chance to go to the movies until I was way up into my twenties. I lived on a ranch way out in the sagebrush in Oregon. There weren't many places to go.

What about comic strips?

Winsor McCay was certainly one of the influences in my life, because *Little Nemo* was one of the first comic strips I can remember. It used to be published in the San Francisco *Examiner*, which we got on our farm. Those characters had a great influence on me. I wasn't so much an admirer of the drawings as I was of the story construction. And my favorite of the characters was old Doctor Pill, because he seemed to be a good guy. He was protective, and trying to do the best he could, while the clown-like guy with the cigar was just fouling things up and making trouble and leading the kids astray. So, you can see I was a kind of a preacher at heart even in those days.

Happy Hooligan; I never liked Happy Hooligan as a character. I liked some of the characters that he was in contact with much better. Happy Hooligan seemed to me to be a person who didn't do anything good in the world. He just blundered around. Generally I would have sympathy for the straight guy, not for the supposed clown who was the main character of the strip. I kind of liked Barney Google, but, oh, Spark Plug and some of the other characters I *loved*.

How about the adventure strips, like Tarzan *and* Prince Valiant*?*

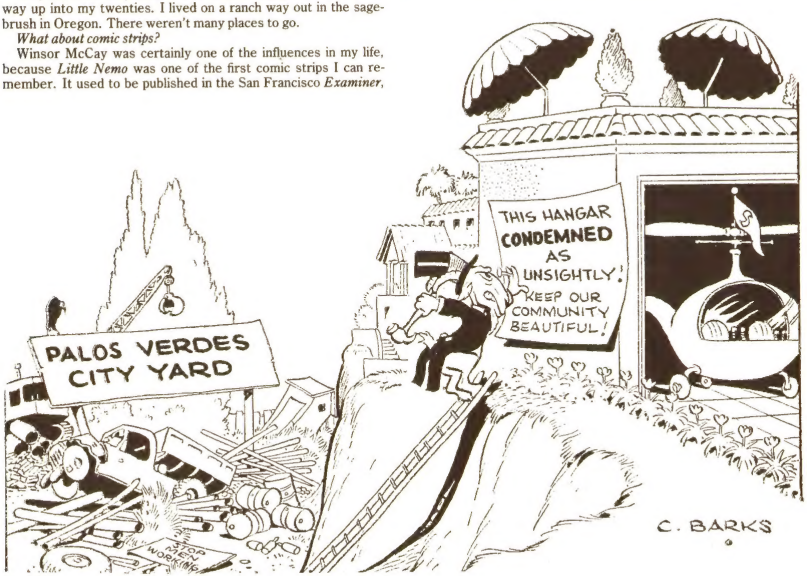
Oh, I liked them. I liked them for their illustrations more than for their scripts. I could follow *Prince Valiant*—it aroused quite a bit of sympathy in me, but as for *Tarzan*, I just liked it for the drawings and that's about all.

Do you still write occasional stories?

No. I quit a couple of years ago. I finally begged off on it. It became such a grind to try to write stories.

Do you mean, to do it on schedule, or even at all?

Oh, just to do it at all. After 25 years I had used up practically every locale in the world, and practically every emotional reason



According to Mike Barrier, who ran another one of these illustrations in Funnyworld *#16, Winter 1974-75, Barks was "hired in 1949 or 1950 to draw several political cartoons by a former resident of Hemet, Ca., who was embroiled with the mayor of Palos Verdes in a dispute over the legality of landing helicopters in the city."*

© W D P

We assume that this is the work of the Danish artist mentioned by Barks, in an Italian edition.

the ducks might have for staging a fight or having an adventure. I had used so many plots and situations that I felt that I was beginning to repeat myself, and I'm sure I was. So I felt it was time for me to get out while I was ahead.

That's a shame. I'll bet you've got a couple of good stories left.

Not long ago I came up with a pretty good idea, and I sent it to Disney's and asked them to relay it on to the publisher over in Denmark.

Why Denmark? Is there a particularly good artist there?

They had a guy over there, evidentally, who could just draw rings around any of the other duck men. He could draw just like my ducks and even better. All they needed was an idea—just that much written on a piece of paper—and they would get some guy to make a script out of it, and then hand it over to this fellow to draw. I had just sent just the bare outline of this story, but evidently the publisher over there didn't like it.

What happened to all your original artwork?

The original artwork was destroyed at the publishing house. They simply couldn't store all the drawings that came in for all their 15 or 20 comic books and none of the editors, none of the artists, felt that the stuff was ever going to be worth anything anyway, so all these thousands of pages of drawings were taken out to the incinerator and burned.

How did you come to do the non-Duck stories?

I guess I was asked to draw and write the Barney Bear and Benny Burro stories because of the extreme shortage of comic book men in those wartime years. The publishing company sent me a script one time for a story with Bugs Bunny, Porky Pig and Petunia Pig. Well, I didn't do too badly on Porky and Petunia, but my Bugs was so bad that the staff artist had to draw all new faces on him. The ones he couldn't change he drew on another piece of paper and cut it out and pasted it over the faces that I had drawn. Oh, I didn't get any praise out of it, but I was happy that it came out that way because I had no intention of ever being that much of a cartoonist that I could draw Bugs Bunny. It was over my head.

This interview was recorded in April 1975, in connection with a film series by Edward Summer entitled The Men Who Made the Comics, *a project supported by a grant from The National Endowment for the Arts, a Federal Agency in Washington, D.C. Other films in the series include those on Milton Caniff and Jack Kirby, portions of which have been seen on CBS's* Camera Three. *Summer is currently working on a feature film titled* Teefr. *The recording engineer for this interview was Sam Grossman. The transcript was edited and prepared for publication by John Benson.*

Barks Books

Several fine Barks books will be published in the near future, each of which promises to be a publication of the highest quality.

Walt Disney's Uncle Scrooge as Written and Drawn by Carl Barks *is the projected title of a book soon to be published by Celestial Arts. This 9 by 12 inch hardcover book with over 365 pages, all in full color, will reprint ten Uncle Scrooge stories, and include a brand new story done especially for the volume! "Back to the Klondike" will be printed with the famous missing pages restored for the first time. The other stories include "The Lemming with the Locket," the seven cities of Cibola, and the Tra-la-la and horseradish stories. The volume will also have reproductions of 11 Barks oil paintings, including a lithograph that will be hand tipped into the volume. Ed Summer is editor of the book, and Barry Larit is in charge of the production. Gary Kurtz of Celestial Arts deserves a special accolade for his persistance over the last four years in bringing this project to fruition. Mike Barrier has written a biographical introduction, and there will be an annotated appendix which includes new interview material with Barks, and a checklist. The book will be printed on 80 lb. gloss-coated text stock, with colored end papers and bound according to library standards with letherette paper. The stories will be colored with a photographically separated wash overlay. The entire production was personally supervised by Barks, the first such book of which this can be said. This is a limited edition of 5,000 copies, of which over 1,000 have been sold at this writing by word of mouth alone. (A trade edition without the lithograph is planned for a later date.) The book can be ordered from: Celestial Arts, Uncle Scrooge book, 231 Adrian Road, Millbrae, Ca. 94030. The price is $85 until Feb. 1, 1981 and $110 thereafter.*

Mike Barrier's long awaited bibliography of Barks' work will also soon be published. This book will list every story and illustration Barks ever did for comics, with a brief plot synopsis, the date Barks submitted the story for publication, etc. A major feature of the book is Barrier's 25,000 word analysis of Barks' work, which incorporates much biographical material and extensive direct quotes from personal interviews with Barks. Needless to say, the book will be well illustrated, not only with examples of Barks' published work, but with rare early photos of Barks, examples of his little seen early magazine cartoons, etc. There will be appendices listing Barks' work on the Disney cartoons, giving details of the once projected Uncle Scrooge feature cartoon that Barks worked on, and listing Barks' stories in the order that they were actually drawn.

News comes from Russ Cochran about another Barks book, this one to reproduce most of the paintings that Barks has done of the Disney ducks. Although Barks did about 120 such paintings, some of them are repeats of others, so the book should have about 80 paintings, in full color, naturally. This book will also appear in both a limited signed edition and a trade edition.

Of course, Abbeville Press currently has hardbound editions of Uncle Scrooge *and* Donald Duck *in print. They are an inexpensive (about $16 each) way of obtaining about 20 Barks stories, including the rare giveaway "Maharaja Donald," but be warned—the stories have been re-laid out to fit new larger sized pages, and the lettering is not Barks' own. Barks wrote special introductions for both these volumes.*

All of Barks' non-Disney comics (33 stories) have been collected in a 275 page black and white 7 x 10 inch paperback titled Barks Bear Book, *by Editions Enfin. Though it's rather expensive, the book is a highly recommended way of reading these wonderful stories. It's available from Horst Schröder, Birger Jarlsg. 119/1, S-113 56 Stockholm, Sweden.*

Carl Barks has written many letters about his work over the years, particularly in the early sixties when he first received direct contact from fans. Barks has given copies of his correspondence to the Walt Disney Archives, and with the cooperation of David Smith, Disney Archivist, Ed Summer and Mike Barrier, we are able to print excerpts of some of these letters.

An early one was a reply to R. O. Burnett, an English professor at Principia College in Illinois.

December 13, 1960

It was nice getting a fan letter. The front office tells me they get *many* letters, but over the past 17 years I can recall only three letters that have been forwarded on to me, two of which were *pan* letters that left my head shrunk for weeks.

During the past year, however, several of my former boy readers, now grown to manhood, have taken the trouble and detective work to ferret out my name. I have had nice letters from them, and their comments, like yours, have been about changes in the duck, lack of guts in the stories, etc. It was an eye-opener to me to learn how observing many readers are. After sixteen-odd years of never knowing how my shots were falling, I guess I'd grown careless. Certainly my lazy mind was telling me that there was no need to strain for sharp new gags, no need to polish a bit of dialogue. Nobody was reading the stuff but 10-year old Johnny boys, who according to the book "can't read." Well, I stand corrected, as well as highly flattered.

About those changes in the drawing of Donald, I can only say that much of the variation is due to trying to keep the duck looking like the screen duck, whose outward appearance has changed radically over the years, even from picture to picture. The model sheet I followed after 1948 was not the one in official acceptance in earlier years. Another factor is that I never could follow the model sheets, anyway. I was asked to do a model sheet of Donald and of Uncle Scrooge several years ago. This model was to be the Barks duck. Well, I couldn't even keep my ducks consistent with that sheet. Then along in the middle fifties the office got on a money-saving kick and began furnishing us artists with a cheaper grade of paper than the good old Strathmore of tender memories. Then the duck's expressions and actions *had to* be simplified. The pen just couldn't be guided with any finesse. The paper has been consistently bad ever since. I know that all comic strip artists have touble keeping their characters looking the same year after year. I often don't see my drawings in print until a year later. Then if the duck's legs look short, or his posture too erect and man-like I try to correct the defect in whatever stories I am currently drawing. Another year goes by before I see that I have over-corrected. So it goes.

About Donald being less vital than he was in the old days, I can only point to the fact that tabu after tabu has been imposed upon us scripters' freedom of material. My early stories were in many instances based on an intense and violent rivalry between Don and the kids. Can I do that now? Ha! If you read *Uncle Scrooge Comics*, you may have noticed the story in which I had Uncle Scrooge and the ducks go to the site of ancient Colchis to find the golden fleece, a plot based upon the old Jason myth. Well, I almost had to eat those 32 pages of drawings because I'd used some Harpies as menaces. It seems that Harpy or Harpie is an obscure nickname for a street walker. I managed to save the story by renaming the old girls *larkies*.

I can't blame the editorial office's jitters for all the slowdown on Donald, however. The truth is that I am just getting old and tired. Will be 60 next March. I don't visualize action with the verve and feeling that I used to. I don't see places in the stories where the situation cries for a certain type of gag. I don't see humor in many things that at one time would have inspired me to write half the night. The letters I have received this past year from fans like you have made me realize that I've got to push my chin up and get back on the ball.

I'm glad you mentioned the little "peering ducks" sketches and things that I used to put in the backgrounds. I will use some again from time to time. The reason I dropped them was because I was afraid they were becoming overused. I remembered the little wall pictures that McManus long used in his *Jiggs* comics, and I felt very tired of them. I wondered if I, too, weren't loading my backgrounds with too many tricks.

In 1968 Dick Blackburn wrote a feature article on Barks for a fledgling magazine called Cheetah, *but before it could appear the magazine folded. Here is part of a letter Barks wrote in connection with the project.*

Regarding your queries about an article, I will try to set you straight with the nitty gritty . . . The magazine, *Cheetah*, itself, doesn't *seem* to be advocating the violent overthrow of Democracy (and money bins), so I'm assuming the editors won't insist on limning Uncle Scrooge in hateful adjectives.

I conceived of Uncle Scrooge as an old-fashioned plutocrat of the Jay Gould, John D. Rockefeller vintage. He was given the name Scrooge to relate to the Dickens character, that name having become a noun/adjective synonymous with *miser*. I had no idea he would become a popular character in the Donald Duck stories. My intention was to use him on rare occasions when an eccentric foil was needed for a gimmick. You'll notice that a whole year passed between his introduction in "Christmas on Bear Mountain" in 1947 and his second appearance in "The Old Castle's Secret" in 1948. After that he grew from a scene-stealer into a star very rapidly as I became aware of the numerous miser gags and economic angles generated by his vast wealth.

From these angles grew the "menaces," the Beagle Boys, and from them the many stories of Uncle Scrooge's efforts to find a safe hiding place for his moola—a search that once took him as far out as Asteroids. Magica De Spell, the frustrated witch, was also invented for a menace role.

Some Uncle Scrooge fans have complained that in late years I turned the Uncle Scrooge stories into mere adventure strips. They are right. I was afraid to keep repeating money and miser gags over and over, and the lack of contact between me and my readers left me ignorant of the fact that readers *liked* the money-miser gags.

There was seldom any connection between Uncle Scrooge's problems and current events. I worked out stories five to eight months ahead of publication, and at one time was a full year ahead of the presses. Sometimes the general trend of national behavior influenced my thinking, as in the way I over-privileged the Beagle Boys to reflect the Supreme Court's permissiveness toward crime. As for the "Shangri La" story [*Uncle Scrooge* #6], which poked fun at the idea of humans living together in unselfish Utopian harmony, it started from my efforts to find a way to use one *billion* of something in a visible way. The bottle cap gag was the result.

Frankly, I was incapable of writing much in the way of hidden "messages" into my stories. In personal background I am a backwoods bumpkin. My education consists of eight grades in a one-room Oregon schoolhouse. I've traveled nowhere, seen few movies or plays, read few books (e.g. Zane Grey's and Perry Mason's.) My art training was part of a course from The Landon Correspondence School about 1916. I learned mostly by imitating the style of published cartoonists. The background research evident in my comic book stories was laboriously dug out of my shelves of National Geographics and Encyclopedia Brittanicas. I've long been afflicted with partial deafness, so I've

missed any oral exchanges with people whose ideas might have broadened my intellect. With such limited knowledge of expression I had to stick to writing my stuff straight.

On the physical plane, however, my experiences during my early years when I worked as a riveter in the railroad carshops, a logger, a press feeder in a printery, a pig poker, cow milker, mule skinner and pseudo cowboy, always terribly inefficiently, gave me practical knowledge for complicating many of Donald Duck's problems. The perversity of beasts, machines, and nature I knew by heart.

One thing I should make clear, I was writing *escapist* entertainment. The plots that so often featured the "far away and long ago" were staged in those areas and times because they took the reader out of his present world. Archaeology is interesting to practically everybody, and I was striving to get the atmosphere of ancient cultures and places into my stories . . . Also the old lost treasure gimmick is forever popular with kids.

The comic books of the "golden years" of the 40s, 50s, and 60s were all escapist reading in my opinion. The kids who read *Superman, Plastic Man*, and *Tales From The Crypt* were all taking a trip. The fad for that form of escape is now almost defunct. Comics have been replaced by pot. I am pleased that I was able to be of some value to the young trippers of those years.

I hope your article writes up other comics besides the Disney ducks. Certainly the writers and artists of those golden years of comicdom entertained and influenced more young people than any comparable group in history.

In my own sphere, I was a loner, working in a small town far from any contacts with other comic book artists. I never sent my scripts to the editors; I started drawing the story with no one's OK but my own. (What a change from my years in the Disney studio Duck story unit!) Very seldom during the years did parts of a story come back for changes, which is fortunate, for I was of a sour-puss temperament that blew my marbles in all directions at the first hint of having to do anything twice.

Ron Goulart, now a well known science fiction author, wrote to Barks early in 1961. In his first letter Goulart said, "Being in an anonymous business myself, advertising, I may be over sensitive, but I do think you should get some credit for the great amount of funny work you have turned out." Barks replied:

March 22, 1961

You have picked yourself an interesting but nerve-twanging profession in advertising. I've only glimpsed the business from a safe distance, but believe I'd prefer to draw ducks than to do even bikini art for the gall-infested clients who have a product to sell.

You ask about the anonimity of being a sharecropper on old Marse Disney's animal farm. Well, I've grown used to it, although there are times when I regret that some particularly good story or drawing doesn't bear my name in pulsating letters. I have been agreeably surprised in recent months to hear from a number of long time readers whose ability to spot my work by its style has been positively uncanny. I guess a ghost's talents aren't entirely wasted when he has readers like that.

I think the policy of non-credit comes from the complexities of keeping all the contributor's bits separated. Few comic book artists do both script and art, as I do, and even fewer have the stuff go through the editorial offices unchanged. Most of the title panels of comic stories would carry several contributor's names. A not unusual one might read:

"Halp! Halp! My Scalp!"
Story suggestion by Oliver Oldhat.
Story script by Bleakwhistle J. Morningfog.
Pencil roughs by Smearcase Smudgefinger.
Dialogue lettering by Grimlips Firmhand.
Pen inking by Scratchmore Vividly.
Brush inking by Eustace B. Sloppy.

After this monumental title would follow four pages of pratfalls by Pinhead Pigeon. I doubt that the public would know which of the formidable array of contributors most deserved an accolade of whatever was handy.

The following interesting excerpts are from several letters to different people.

The mind is not a bottomless well of ideas, and mine is about pumped dry. I have recently reutilized some of my plot formulas around new gimmicks or visa versa in a desperate effort to keep ahead of the deadlines. This mechanical formulation of stories may eventually supplant my old method of writing by inspiration. I will always keep striving, though, to come up with bright new plots, even though the characters and props comprise the same old stable of professors, voracious crocodiles, ill tempered birds, animals and strong-jawed women.

The editors have long asked me why I don't do *more* rewriting. They say that some of the old plots and situation gags are too good to have been used only once and then buried forever. Who would have thought there were collectors like yourself who would recognize, and still have, the original versions?

* * *

So you're going to try comic book cartooning? I hope you have a sense of humor and a thick skin. The opinions of editors can often seem *insane*. You've got to remember that it's their opinions, not yours, that put the figures on the paychecks. Smilingly agree that their asinine ideas are world beaters. The first rule of being a successful hack is to act like a hack horse. Plod, plod, plod.

* * *

I wouldn't know if Uncle Scrooge was ever used in a money story on TV. I don't own a TV, and never expect to.

* * *

Gyro Gearloose was at first an incidental character whom I expected to use only once or twice. Had I guessed that he would become such a useful character, I would have drawn him differently, especially shorter. I could have dreamed up a face that would be more expressive and easier to draw. I'm kind of wondering whether the little bulb-headed helper I invented for Gyro will become a star. He might have to be given a way of talking before he can ever amount to much.

* * *

You ask what my opinion is of other funny-animal comic books. I usually thought their stories were weak or montonously formulated, or both. Woody Woodpecker I liked. Porky Pig I detested, probably because of his stutter. Bugs Bunny was often very funny in a slapstick sort of way. Actually I read very few comic books of any kind. I was afraid the formats might be catching to the extent that my own stuff would start following the same patterns. I know only a few of the artists that worked or now work at Western. I don't know which ones did which books, and never asked. I lived a day's drive round trip from the Western Pub. Offices, and I went in no oftener than once a month if I could avoid it. The chances of meeting another free-lancing artist in the few minutes I'd be in the office were dim indeed.

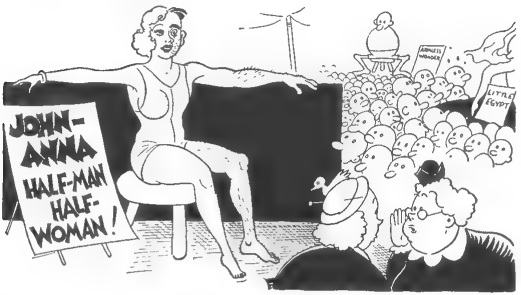
* * *

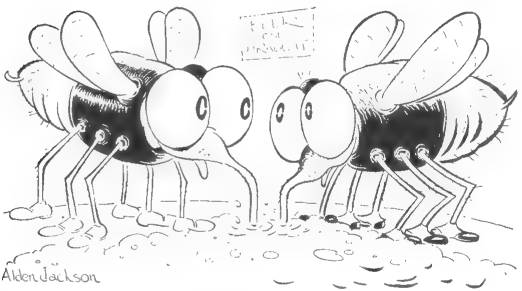
It's pleasing to know that I have readers who like my stuff well enough to become fans. I always try to write a story so interesting that I wouldn't mind buying it myself. And therefore I polish the gags and the timing and the plots more than the writers in this low paid field who try only to get a story past the editors. I hope my duck stories have helped to give you a broader understanding of life, as well as entertainment. I've tried to keep away from the shop-worn cops and robbers theme that depraves so much of TV and the other media these days.

As to your opinion of me as being too modest, I'll say that *I* know how much slow, laborious sweat went into those easy-looking stories. It wasn't genius, or even unusual talent that made them good—it was patience, and a large waste basket.

The December 29, 1975 issue of The New Yorker *ran a "Profile" of Clarence Nash, Donald Duck's voice. Barks and his work in the studio story unit were mentioned. This quick sketch added to a personal letter was Barks' comment on the piece.*

THOSE HALCYON DAYS...





From 1931 to 1935, Carl Barks was an editor and chief contributor of a magazine that he describes thusly:

The Calgary Eye-Opener was 40 years ahead of its time. Its type of risque humor is *in* nowadays. It was at one time published in Calgary, Canada by a Canadian M.P. named Bob Edwards. One of the Fawcett Brothers of Minneapolis, founders of the Fawcett publishing empire, bought the title from Bob Edwards' estate. The brothers had parted company, and the one that bought the *Eye-Opener* soon found himself broke. He died, and the book passed into a succession of hands until it, too, died in the early 1940's.

The following exchange of letters between Barks and one of The Eye-Opener*'s former contributors, John Coulthard (now deceased), gives a bit of the flavor of those days.*

August 26, 1961

Dear Carl that Barks:

In case you are wondering how I located you after generations of time, Ron Goulart brought up your address this afternoon. He is an original art collector who discovered me some weeks ago and comes up now and then to talk about them.

When he was up recently, I was telling of my sordid past and mentioned that I had drawn for something called the *Eye-Opener*, of which, of course, he had never heard. In showing him some of the old annuals we ran onto some of your lewd opuses and was he ever amazed. Then he told me about contacting you. Small world.

Have wondered at times what had happended to you, as someone told me it seems like years ago that you weren't with Disney. I dig out my book of clips of the *Eye-Opener* things now and then to show people to what depths I have gone in the past. A long tam' ago, what?

The arthritis that had me stranded in Modesto for so long finally burned out in '42 enough so that I decided to hit SF and try commercial art, knowing nothing about the racket. Well, I came here at a time when they were so wild to get stuff done they'd give it to me without asking if I knew what I was doing. Which I didn't mostly.

After some 5 or 6 months of sniping freelance stuff I came up here to do the extra work of an old timer, now dead. So now it is nigh 17 years since I moved into the place. Have a studio here in the middle of town on the 12th floor some 60' long by 30 wide for which I pay 30 bux —count'em—30 a month! It is now just about full of books, primitive art, cartoon originals and plants.

For years I did almost no cartoons but am getting back into some of it now. In fact, am working up a bunch of cartoon spots for a daily limerick syndicate stunt and if I can sell it and make enough I'll chop off a lot of the stuff I do for that. Cartoons is what I really want to do.

Ron brought one of the comic books he says you perpetrate and, man, is it a far cry from the eye opening opuses of your, spelled yore. What we innocently thot lewd in those days is the soul of innocence compared to the stuff done today, what?

Let's hear from thee one of these days . . .

Sincerely,
Coulthard

Oct. 8, 1961

Dear John:

So my lurid past has caught up with me? A voice from the hungry thirties rises, and a grimy finger points. The over-developed

bosoms of a horde of cartoon cuties point, too, and *plop* goes the carefully polished facade of respectability that I've labored years to erect. . . How are you, old fellow-developer of pen-and-ink bosoms? (Them was the days when drawing was *fun*!, eh?)

Your letter revived memories of those halcyon days when a guy always knew that WPA was just around the corner. I got 90 bucks a month from the *EyeO*, which was for writing and drawing more than half the book, editing it, and composing stalling letters to you contribs to gloss over the fact that no money was in the bank to pay for your stuff.

Actually, the little old *E-O* was making a small profit each month, but the Henna-Haired Hurricane of Joy and Laughter (remember her by-line?) would raid the till for bistro money every time a theatrical celeb came to town. By the time she sobered up the *E-O* would be in hock for months to come.

Thanks for reminding me of those good old days; it makes the *worst* of today's days seem *so* good.

You seem to be doing well, John, and that 30x60 studio of yours sounds like a good place to stage orgies. You could afford 'em too, on what you save in rent. I hope your limerick syndicate spot works out. Nothing beats a steady market for your output.

At Whitman Pub., where I sell my stuff, they tell me that the cartoon business has never been better. I can believe it, although out here in the land of milk and honey (dairies and beekeeping) I never meet a cartoonist to talk shop with from one war to another.

I believe you mentioned long ago that you and Jim Algar of Disney's were friends in old Modesto. Jim (James now) is a top hand at the mouse corral, as you've no doubt noticed on screen credits and TV. He didn't polish no apples to get there, either. He had it.

Well, after 26 years it's been a pleasure to hear a voice from the scarlet past. Be good to all old *E-O* type bimbos, John. Their bulges once brought us cartoonists occasional hamburgers.

I better get back to drawing my *ducks* before I shed a tear.

Best wishes,
Carl

On these pages are examples of Barks' work for The Eye-Opener. *These are gag panels, although the captions have been lost in many cases. As a matter of fact, the cartoons were sometimes reused in a later issue with different captions. Barks signed some of his drawings with the name of the gag writer, a practice that gave the magazine the appearance of having a larger art staff.*

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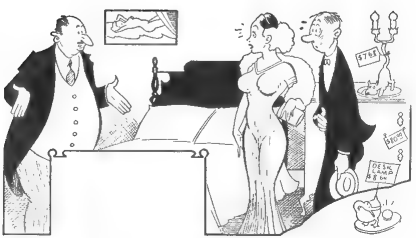

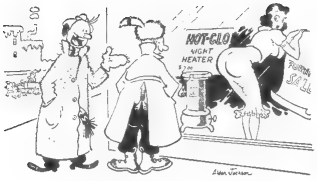
HOT-GLO
NIGHT
HEATER

RED MOON
NUDIST
COLONY
JIM
BUTLER

UTAH
SEAMAN
JOE

SNATZ
BREWERY
Allen Jackson

LETTERS

I loved the concept of putting down on tape the life of someone as important as Eisner direct from the man himself. I appreciate Eisner's ability to relay his remembrances without an overdose of self-serving whitewashing. That's a bugaboo that most interviewers can't seem to overcome. It's nice to see that Will managed to minimize the posturing and tell it pretty much like it was. The tidbits on the early shop atmosphere were simply great. I'd never really gotten a feel for what they were like, but Eisner and Feiffer's remarks brought them into pretty sharp focus for me. You deserve a hearty 'well done' for putting this into print and a minor 'damnation' for taking so long to do so.

The Griffith thing was so much bull. I've never been a great fan of Bill's work and, consequently, I much prefer an occasional dose of purile fantasy from someone who draws pretty pictures than Griffith's subjective views of humor. I don't find him funny and certainly not a class act, art-wise. I realize that he has a following (which includes some of my best friends), but it seems that it should be obvious to Bill that Zippy isn't for everyone and neither are the barbarians and the bazoooms. There's room for a wide spectrum of definitions of the Underground genre. Grifith obviously has his own and he's certainly welcome to it. I can only ask him a modified version of the question he asked himself in what I'm sure is a vain attempt to bring my point home to him. "Why are so many books (by Griffith) coming out in which I can't find even one page that I like?"

—Jim Vandebonceur, Jr.
Palo Alto, Ca.

I agree with your statement in the 6 point italics, that "the *realization* of the story by the artist is the vital element in comics." A puterd script with great art will be collected and admired (cf. the great 1955–56 western and sf stories by Williamson and Torres in the post-code Timely comics). But who notices or remembers or saves a great script with bad (or even run-of-the-bulpen) art? 'Course, the best in comics couples great scripts *and* art: Segar, Harold Grey, *Barnaby*, *Krazy Kat*, *Plastic Man*, Barks.

Griffith's castigation of the cliches in overground comics (and, by extension, groundlevel comics, which didn't exist when he wrote this piece) can be applied equally to undergrounds. Undergrounds in 1973 still retained some of their initial freshness and promise. In the past seven years they've run into the sands—both their creators and the "alternative distribution system" that gave them commercial viability.

Griffith's world of comics is not mine. I'm a dyed-in-the-four-color-press "comics creep" and do frequently "dicker over a panel drawn 20 years ago"—in some cases, 80 years ago. Unfortunately, few undergrounds give us creeps anything to dicker about. —Marty Pahls
San Francisco, Ca.

Although I liked and agreed with your comment that Eisner started *The Spirit* for a showcase and a place to experiment with his talents, looking at the page of Joe Dope strips makes me angry. I think of what he let *The Spirit* degenerate into in '51 when he was doing these Joe Dopes. Why couldn't he have let Grandenetti ink them while he did *The Spirit*? They are very nice art but the content is too trivial. If he thought of comics as fine art or literature of a visual nature . . . I just don't get it.

I was pleased to see a good "beneath the surface" review of the Zippy stories. Spiegelman's review of the Smithsonian volume was OK in *Panels*, but I think he drifted off into talking about the contents too much instead of how it gives you a good though biased overview of strips. Your own review of *Lemme Outa Here* kept up my interest in what you had to say about a comic I had read with not much excitement. When I read it again it will be with a new eye and ear.

I disagree with Joe Pilati's review of *Corporate Crime*. I enjoyed the wide variety in the stories very much. And though the punctuation flubs should have been caught by Rifas, I'm all for the artists using their own lettering styles, cruddy or no. There's a charm that's lost with standard comic book lettering. Winsor McCay's crowded balloons are odd—but so is seeing Abe Kanegson's lettering on *Clifford*. And what would Raymond's *Flash Gordon* look like if it were lettered by Joe Rosen?

—Denis McFarling
Kansas City, Mo.

Panels is dense with content in both text and images, and that is something, especially these days. It is pared down to the essential as all good editing is. Though I've known Will Eisner for years, I never knew all the professional detail in the pages about him. Same for Jules Feiffer. They are privileged conversations.

—David Pascal
New York, N.Y.

Too much text, not enough pictures.

—Jacques Dutry
Aire sur l'Adour, France

Panels is terrific! (Of course, those nice reviews of my stuff have nothing to do with that opinion.) The Eisner reminiscence kind of depressed me, though. It's sad to know how easy it is to lose your inspiration. Well, it's educational anyway—a warning to all us underground upstarts!

San Francisco, Ca.

In regard to Griffith's rabid ravings, all I can say is that I heartily endorse his sentiments and give them the cat yronwode "My Theory Exactly" award of the month. If anything, I would have been even more harsh in my comments than Griffith was—albeit not as witty. Being a woman, I simply do not find Barbara Feiffer amusing, entertaining, philosophically intriguing or emotionally moving about endless pictures of other women being cut apart by laser rays or eaten by monsters with large genitalia. Unless disgust is an emotionally moving entertainment. I love comics 'n' comix both, but (naming no names) am almost unable to buy certain titles and/or the works of certain authors because the images they present are so cruel, misogynous, sadistic, ugly and downright poo-poo cacaoriented that I don't want to even *look* at them. Some pretend to disguise their violent and demeaning fantasies beneath a veneer of anarcho-revolutionary sentiment but whom are they kidding? Do I sound like the outraged woman who lambasted EC not so long ago? I hope not! But if it came to living out *her* fantasy-life or that of S. Clay Corben-Crumb, I know which I'd choose. Being kissed by Cary Grant is *much* more fun than being butt-fucked and dismembered, don't you think?

In regard to Feiffer's list of scripts, I've found a few examples where he and Will Eisner are not in agreement. For instance: Feiffer says he did *not* write "The Deadly Comic Book" (2/27/49)—yet Eisner says he *did*! Likewise, Feiffer claims 2/4/51 as his when this is nothing more than a reprint of 8/24/47 ("Showdown With The Octopus") with a short new framing sequence—and he says he did *not* write 8/24/47, right there on the list! What he probably *did* was write the 1951 one page frame and edit the original down to fit. There are a few other anomalies of this nature, but on the whole I was surprised to see how accurate my own guesses as to Feiffer's scripts were. The only one I'm *sure* he wrote, and which he doesn't claim, is 5/25/52 ("Assassins Inc., Part 2") which is, as far as I can tell, by the same hand who wrote the first part, which he *does* claim.

I really must compliment you on your choice of illustrations. The *P.S.* covers, Feiffer's script and rough layout for the "Outer Space" Spirit story (yes, that *is* Will's handwriting on the rewritten balloons), and the series of *Joe Dope* strips are the kind of rare items which are meant to be shared. —cat yronwode
Birch Tree, Mo.

First, let me say that *Panels* is a much needed magazine that offers a format for analyzing and admiring the art of comics. It fills the void left by *Graphic Story Magazine*.

In regards to Bill Griffth's "A Sour Look At The Comix Scene," I agree with much of what he says, to a point. I don't believe that underground comix should be a format for any one type of story. Griffith wrote his article back when undergrounds were at their peak, and it is true that a certain amount of the material being cranked out during that period was nothing more than a sexed up imitation of overground comics, and a lot of it was just plain bad. But when Griffith referred to the sex-gore-fantasy comix, he was undoubtedly referring to Richard Corben and comix like *Slow Death*, *Skull*, *Fantagor*, *Grimwit*, and others. Why, though, is it (or was it) wrong, or contrary to the cause, for this type of material to be part of the underground scene? In my mind, the very purpose of the underground movement is to offer artists and writers an outlet to do the kinds of things they can't do elsewhere, be it at Marvel or DC, Warren of any other branch of the print medium.

Ever since the late 60's, I've bought just about every underground that was halfway decent, and there have been just as many comix I haven't bought. The point is that I love undergrounds. But if Griffith's gripe is that many comix are (or were) just Marvel with exposed breasts and dangling penises, aren't the Freak Brothers merely Archie-Reggie-& Jughead after discovering drugs and sex? Isn't *Zap* an acid vision of *Mad*? Isn't *Dirty Duck* a cousin of *Krazy Kat*?

Further, as a comix writer, I take exception to Griffith's seeming objection to collaborations: ". . . 'art' by one guy, 'script' by another. . ." He seems to be saying that a true underground artist should be one guy, a creator in every sense of the word, writer, illustrator, colorist, etc. But what becomes of people who can write but can't draw? Why can't we team up with artists? Is it wrong for underground writers and artists to collaborate simply because that's what Marvel does?

Probably the best of the underground creators are totally original voices, people like Art Spiegelman, Joel Beck, Greg Irons, and Bill Griffith. These guys imitate nothing. They simply have these incredible ideas, that spring from who-knows-where, and they put them down on paper. These men are Artists, and they're the very soul of comix, and I'm sure that it's their work that Griffith is crying out for.

But Griffith himself states that entertainment is the vehicle, and I think he's confusing his principles when he advocates both underground comix and popular entertainment, as both terms are not always synonymous. —Mark Burbey
Miami, Fla

I thought Kasakove's review of Mark Beyer's book was extremely perceptive and well-written . . . wish I had said about three-quaters of it, but I didn't. I found Pilati's review of *Corporate Crime* 1 & 2 meandering and hard to follow. I admit to not having read the books, but don't think that's the problem. I regularly read reviews of books I haven't read in *Cascade* and am able to form a fair idea of the contents and whether I want to read the book or not. Pilati seemed to be reviewing the various "crimes," not the comics themselves. —Bill Mason
Montreal, Quebec

That the final few pages were devoted to reviews having nothing to do with Eisner raised the question of what the relationship was, to him, of the much cruder art appearing in that section. —Larry Ivie
Millbrae, Ca.

Glad you noticed the intent to show a relationship, Larry!

Panels is a fine job, all 'round. Hope you can keep it afloat without any compromise.

Why not interview: Mort Meskin, Klaus Nordling, Andre le Blanc, Fred Guardineer, Wally Wood, Jerry Grandenetti, George Russos, Dan Barry (and Sy), Creig Flessel? All in your NYC area!

Some "next issue" hints would've been right, don't you think? To bring 'em back for the next issue?"

— Alex Toth
Los Angeles, Ca.

We never know the line-up of material for an issue of Panels *very far in advance, and hesitate to promise something that may never appear. However, in the future we hope to run features on: Mort Meskin by Ron Goulart; Jerry Iger by E.B. Boatner; Harvey Pekar by Bill Mason; and the artists of* Jingle Jangle Comics *by Chris Couch. We're planning to run an interview with Diane Noomin, and one with Harvey Kurtzman and Gil Kane, together, recalling their earliest days in comics.*

Address all letters to: John Benson, 205 W. 80th Street, #2E, New York, N.Y. 10024.

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IS WAR HELL?

THE EVOLUTION OF AN ARTIST'S VIEWPOINT

By John Benson

It was as editor-writer of *Two-Fisted Tales* and *Frontline Combat* from 1950 to the end of 1953 that Harvey Kurtzman earned his reputation as one of the few genuine masters of the comics medium. For those who didn't read his work when it first appeared, or who don't have access to those now rare original issues, Kurtzman's reputation has remained untested. Now, with Russ Cochran's publication of the complete *Two-Fisted Tales*, Kurtzman's extraordinarily original and mature approach to comics is at last available for all to see. Kurtzman's realistic, yet very dramatic and emotional treatment of the events of war is still gripping. His explorations of the wars of history are still fascinating. His narrative methods are still apt and sophisticated. These esthetic achievements deserve extended analysis. But the republication of the stories in their original order also facilitates a review of Kurtzman's shifting attitudes towards war over the life of the series, which is what this article will focus on.

At the 1972 EC convention Kurtzman faced a perceptive audience who seemed quite familiar with his work. Several times in the evening he was pressed to comment on his changing point of view. One questioner put it especially succinctly: "Your stories like the one on the amphibious rescue plane, which was interesting factually and all of that, came toward the end, as opposed to the beginning when you had these incredibly grisly anti-war stories portraying war as something really terrible. It seems that the editorial policy of the war books changed from a really cynical look at the institution of war to one of giving credit to all those guys doing a brave job."

Perhaps the apogee of the latter is Kurtzman's special "Air Force Issue," *Frontline Combat* #12. The message of "credit to all those guys doing a brave job" is quite clear in each story, but just to be sure, Kurtzman opens the book with a full page dedication to the Air Force that winds up, "Our Air Force is doing a fine job all over the world! We owe them a debt of gratitude!," and closes it with another full page promotion for the Air Force's public relations civilian unit, the Ground Observer Corps. Kurtzman admits that "there was a certain amount of complicity with the Air Force" in preparing that issue. A member of his staff

put it more directly: "We were seduced by the Air Force."

Appearing on the newsstands the same month as the "Air Force Issue" was *Two-Fisted Tales* #33, which contained "Atom Bomb," Kurtzman's searing statement on America's bombing of Nagasaki in 1945. Using his familiar techniques of involving the reader with the fate of a small group of people—in this case a civilian Japanese family—and using a framing device that adds dimension by distancing, Kurtzman, aided by some of Wally Wood's finest illustrations, uncompromisingly involves the reader in the destruction, loss of life, misery and suffering that began the nuclear age. Even when compared to Keiji Nakazawa's horrifying, detailed autobiographical comic book novel about the same subject, *Hadashi No Gen*, Kurtzman's masterfully compressed story is still a superior artistic statement that is extremely moving.

It is difficult to believe that the same person wrote both "Atom Bomb" and the "Air Force Issue" at around the same time, and Kurtzman's explanation in 1972—"We tried to do 'technological' stories as well as 'human' stories"—hardly explains the discrepancy. Perhaps part of the answer can be found by examining the entire run of *Two-Fisted Tales*.

"Atom Bomb" was something of an anomaly, appearing as it did near the end of Kurtzman's editorship of *Two-Fisted Tales*. Most of Kurtzman's "anti-war" stories were at the beginning of the series. Kurtzman, of course, was never "anti-war" in any true pacifist sense. He obviously believed that there are times when men must go to war; once he even said, "To some degree I guess we have an obligation to support war. Although if we ever stand on a hilltop and look at that kind of reasoning it all gets to look pretty weird." His "anti-war" stories were really only attempts to point out that war is not undertaken without human cost; in death, in the anguish of the survivors, and in its effect on those who learn to kill.

Up through #26, each issue of *Two-Fisted Tales* had one or two stories with an explicit message of this type. In issue #22, for example, "Enemy Contact" ends with the observation, "Isn't it strange! While one instinct makes man move heaven and earth to save a life...another, less noble instinct lets him tear other men to bits without mercy." In the same issue, in "Dying City," a North Korean rails at the dead form of his grandson, who had joined the Communist forces:

YOU COULDN'T SEE WHAT YOU WERE DOING WHEN YOU CAME FLYIN' WITH YOUR GUN!
DID YOU SEE THEN THAT YOUR FATHER WOULD BE CRUSHED FLAT UNDER THE TREADS OF A WAR TANK?
DID YOU SEE THAT YOUR MOTHER AND LITTLE SISTER WOULD BE TORN TO PIECES BY A HAND GRENADE?
DID YOU SEE OUR CITY, BROKEN AND RUINED? DID YOU SEE THE DESTROYED HOMES AND FACTORIES?
WHAT DOES THE FUTURE MEAN WHEN EVERYTHING YOU LOVE IS DEAD, MY SON?
WHAT IS LEFT? WHAT GOOD IS YOUR REVOLUTION? WHAT GOOD?
WHAT GOOD?

The remaining stories in these early issues are mostly unadorned, gutsy action dramas that, as Kurtzman has described them, "worked on the level of a GI, a single soldier having an experience in combat." These stories depicted events without overt moralizing, and are masterpieces of compact intelligent comics storytelling. A fine example is "Death Stand," issue #23, one of a series of Korean tales illustrated by Jack Davis. It tells of a jeep-load of GI's who try to rescue a pilot who's had to bail out just behind enemy lines. Only one man survives. The tale's ironic point is the dogface truism, "When that bullet has your name on it...you go!"

In another Davis illustrated Korean tale, "Hill 203," issue #24, a small combat group holds a hill through a night of heavy fighting. These stories may have been historically and technically accurate, but their main intent, at which they were successful, was to involve the reader in a gut-wrenching incident.

It gradually became apparent that Kurzman was no longer content merely to tell combat incidents. His research, probably entered into at first to ensure authenticity of minor details, had begun to exert its own fascination. In *Two-Fisted Tales* #26, Kurtzman tried something very ambitious—a whole issue with a single theme based on the headlines of the day, "A Document of the Action at the Changjin Reservoir." The decision was a fateful one, for this is a watershed issue, and all the issues that came after are recognizably different in outlook from those that came before. Some of the reasons why this shift was inevitable become evident upon a close analysis of the issue.

Instead of focusing on the interactions of a few people, the subject of issue #26 was a large military operation, a theme as appropriate to the historian as the dramatist. The viewpoint was no longer that of the GI but of the general. The first story of the issue, "The Trap," makes this rather explicit. Though it does deal with a small action-filled skirmish, the point of the story is that the soldier in the field never knows what the whole plan of operations is.

The second story, "Hagaru-Ri," shows another consequence of the shift in focus. Here is the first example of Kurtzman's interest in the digital designations of warfare—C-119's, C-47's and F-84's—that reached its zenith in the "Air Force Issue," where each story title was that of an aircraft model. "Hagaru-Ri" is also the first Kurtzman "how-to" story—in this case, how to bomb a target. A good later example is "Tide," in *Two-Fisted Tales* #32—how to clear a mined beach to make it safe for landing. The moral of "Hagaru-Ri" is stated very directly:

AND HERE IT BECOMES CLEAR! A MODERN MACHINE CONTROLLED BY A SINGLE MODERN MAN...
...CAN DO MUCH MORE WORK THAN AN EQUAL MAN, UNDER PRIMITIVE CONDITIONS...
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This message, of more interest to the general or historian than the dramatist, would probably not have interested Kurtzman, and certainly would not have been stated so baldly by him, six months earlier.

In "Link-Up," the third story, we see the emergence of the "guys doing a brave job" theme. The company complainer, who

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had wanted only to get back home, yells out at the end, as he's carried away by medics, "I won't leave now! Look what they did to the boys! I can still fight 'em!"

But the inevitable change of viewpoint is most telling in "Hungnam," the last story of the issue. Here is a superbly illustrated Wood story where our sympathies are with a little dog—apparently similar in mood and content to "Atom Bomb" or "A Baby" in *Frontline Combat* #10. But on close analysis it is not similar at all. This story is presented as part of a major maneuver by the US Marines in a war that the country was still involved in when the story was written. In the story, the port city is destroyed to prevent UN materiel from falling into the hands of the enemy. While "Atom Bomb" was about the insanity of war's destructiveness, "Hungnam" shows a destruction that within its narrative context was logical and necessary.

The story's dramatic needs would have been better served if the dog had been a Korean orphan child—the fate of a human being would have meant greater involvement for the reader. But there are reasons why Kurtzman chose not to do this. "Poor innocent pooch! He doesn't know..." Neither would a child who didn't speak English, but while it's reasonable for a dog not to know the plans of men, a child's ignorance might call those plans into question. More importantly, while it may be justifiable to plan for destruction that costs a dog its life, how could a story about our guys doing a brave job "while you were rushing to get your Christmas shopping done" possibly end on the bitter note of a child dying through the actions of UN soldiers? So the protagonist couldn't be a child, even though the caption on the last page reads, "The birthday of the Prince of Peace! And yet on earth, men were still killing their fellow *men*!" (emphasis supplied), while the picture underneath shows the carcass of a *dog*.

Once Kurtzman had had a taste of being a general, he was never really a footsoldier again. After issue #26, there was a decided shift in the type of stories he wrote. "Anti-war" stories all but disappeared. In their place was an increasing number of historical epics, in which Kurtzman became fascinated (and fascinated the reader as well) with the details and military lessons of history. The letters printed were increasingly from war buffs who delighted in catching Kurtzman and his artists in minor inaccuracies in uniforms, weaponry and such.

The change in the nature of the straight combat tales of Korea and World War II was even more significant. In the later issues, these stories tended to suggest that war was a constructive endeavor that requires only teamwork in order to succeed. For example, "Wake," in issue #30, ends with, "We were all in this war together—soldiers *and* civilians!" In the same issue, the drama in "Bunker" arises from a conflict between rival units of US forces, who are fighting a depersonalized enemy. Each unit claims responsibility for taking the hill. The conflict is resolved when a sergeant posts a sign, "This hill taken by courtesy of US Army."

Kurtzman has said, "I don't regard myself as a man who pushes specific opinions or strong points of view." But there is an undeniable element of didacticism in his work. Kurtzman always tried to take a responsible stance, and his oft stated contempt for the attitude displayed by some comics, that war consisted of American soldiers "merrily killing little buck-toothed yellow men with the butt of a rifle," was certainly deeply felt.

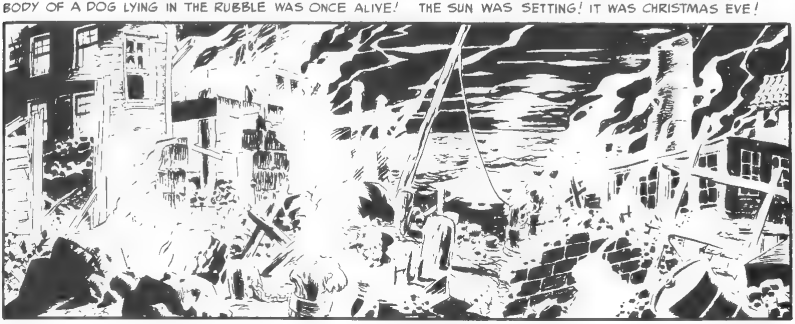
When he started writing war comics, he said, "I had to determine a certain attitude that I'd approach war stories with, and ABC logic led me to research actual war and tell what was true about war." The problem is that "truth" can take many forms. It's true that "on August 9, 1945, the A-bomb killed 29,793 people and destroyed 18,409 homes*." It's also true that "The Air Force's answer to the MIG 15 was the F-86 sabre jet." To Kurtzman these and other war related facts of greater or lesser importance, from a statement of the efficacy of modern war equipment to the revelation that Custer was a vainglorious fool, were all "truths" which were valid for dramatization.

One is reminded of Sam Moskowitz's comment on Ray Bradbury: "His stories raise issues on purely emotional levels ...It is often difficult to determine which issues he artificially conjures for the sake of the story, and on which issues he is sincere" (*Amazing*, Oct. 1961). After reading through *Two-Fisted Tales*, one is led to the conclusion that in at least some cases Kurtzman allowed the dramatic structure of a story to lead to its own conclusion. The dramatic structure of "Atom Bomb" led to a moral statement. The dramatic structure of "Hagaru-Ri" led to a military truism.

In a recent unguarded moment, Kurtzman admitted as much: "After awhile you'd be desperate for a plot, and you'd cast about for just a plot. Sometimes you came upon a little bit of thinking that didn't necessarily say that war was hell..."

The Complete Two-Fisted Tales *contains all 24 issues in four 9 by 12 inch hardcover volumes. The covers of each comic are in color; the interiors are in black and white. The set is annotated by John Benson, with photographs and a special article by E.B. Boatner. All four volumes are available in an illustrated slipcase for $65 ($70 in Canada) postpaid from the publisher, Russ Cochran, P.O. Box 469, West Plains, Mo. 65775*

*Actually, in this case, Kurtzman was misled by data available in 1953. It's now known that approximately 74,000 people died at Nagasaki.


BUT FOR THE FLICKERING FLAMES, AND THE FLITTING FIGURES OF THE ADVANCE CHINESE SCOUTS, IT WAS HARD TO BELIEVE LIFE AND MOVEMENT ONCE BELONGED TO HUNGNAM! IT WAS HARD TO BELIEVE THAT THE BROKEN LITTLE BODY OF A DOG LYING IN THE RUBBLE WAS ONCE ALIVE! THE SUN WAS SETTING! IT WAS CHRISTMAS EVE!

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JESSE MARSH WAS A VERY PRIVATE MAN. A GOOD MAN · SHY. MATTER OF FACT · SHORT ON WORDS. LONG ON THOUGHT · PROLIFIC AT HIS WORK · TO AN ASTOUNDING DEGREE · ECLIPSING, IN FACT, ALL BUT HIGHSPEED PRODUCTION STORIES ABOUT KIRBY, INFANTINO AND SEKOWSKY HEARD OVER THE YEARS · JESSE DID IT ALL, ALWAYS: PENCILLED, LETTERED AND INKED THE LOT.

HE DID IT ALL VERY WELL, TOO.

JESSE EXPERIMENTED CONSTANTLY, FINDING NEW METHODS AND TECHNIQUES TO DO THE JOB — RESTLESS, KNOWLEDGEABLE, ASTUTE — BUT UNWILLING TO 'TALK SHOP' WITH COLLEAGUES.

HE WORKED HARD · RUMOR HAS IT HE PLAYED HARD, TOO · BUT NOT MUCH · HE LIVED IN MONROVIA, CALIFORNIA, WITH HIS AGED PARENTS, AND TOOK CARE OF THEM TO THE LAST · UPON THEIR PASSING, ALONE, MIDDLE-AGED, HE WENT ON WORKING HARD, DESPITE FAILING EYESIGHT DUE TO HIS BOUT WITH DIABETES — AND, IN FACT, DIED UNATTENDED, IN THAT FAMILY HOME — WHERE HE WAS FOUND DAYS LATER ·

UNHERALDED BY THEN-EMERGING FANDOM WHICH HARDLY KNEW OF THE MAN OR HIS WORK OR, WORSE, DISMISSED BOTH.

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TWENTY-ODD YEARS OF COMICS BY A MAN WHO DESERVES OUR ATTENTION, APPRECIATION AND STUDIED CONSIDERATION FOR HIS NEO MAN WORK.

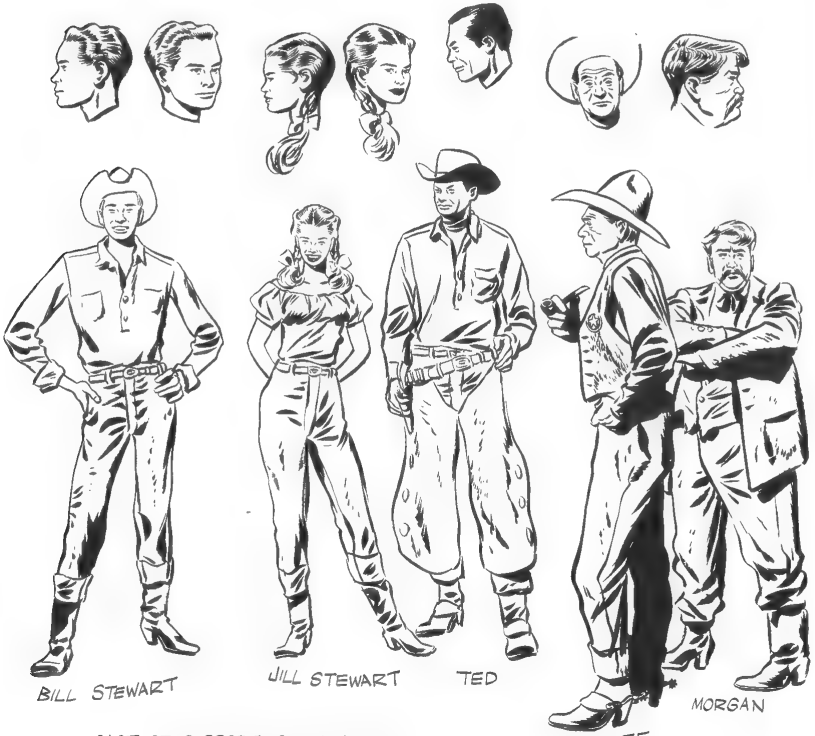
MY AWARENESS OF JESSE'S WESTERN ART IN "GENE AUTRY" COMICS (DELL) OF THE EARLY 1940S TURNED ME INTO HIS THEN-RATHER LOW KEY STYLE OF STORY-TELLING — SO FAR AFIELD FROM THE WILD AND WOOLY NEW YORK CITY-BASED ARTWORK OF OUR EISNER, MESKIN, FINE, COLE, KIRBY, KIDA, FUJE, ROBINSON, CAZENEUVE AND RICE, LUBBERS AND SAAF AND ELIAS, ETC, ETC. WHICH, IN TOTO, WAS

FORMING MY OWN TASTES, DIRECTION and SKILLS BY EXAMPLE — I REALIZED JESSE WAS ONE to WATCH, TOO!

I WAS FORTUNATE TO HAVE WORKED in BOTH CAMPS, ON BOTH COASTS, and to EXPERIENCE their DIFFERENT APPROACHES to PRODUCING DISSIMILAR COMICS; from SCRIPT to COLOR! I CUT MY TEETH ON SUPERJOCKS as a YOUNG TURD CARTOONIST in NEW YORK CITY, and THEN SEGUED INTO WESTERNS, WAR, ROMANCE, TEEN, HUMOR, ADVENTURE, HORROR... for DC; FAMOUS FUNNIES; STANDARD; E.C., and OTHERS — MY MOVE WEST PUT ME INTO the DELL ("MAMA") COMICS LINE — WHERE MORE LESSONS WERE LEARNT — A NEW TACK, ENTIRELY — and AS MUCH FUN, DESPITE FISCAL and EDITORIAL DEFICIENCIES — NICE GUYS and CONCEPTS PREVAILED...

LITTLE DID I KNOW, IN 1948, WHILE ADMIRING JESSE'S "TARZAN" COMICS in NEW YORK, that 8 YEARS LATER, WE'D BE FELLOW-EMPLOYEES in LOS ANGELES — THAT WE'D MEET, SORT OF.

REMEMBER, IF YOU WILL, that the DELL COMICS LINE MEANT UNSENSATIONALIZED COMICS — DELL'S PLEDGE to PARENTS' 'BOX', PRINTED IN, OR ON, EVERY COMIC BOOK, MEANT EXACTLY WHAT IT SAID — A GOOD; CLEAN;



CAST OF SUPPORTING CHARACTERS
IN "LUCKY PIECE" AUTRY NO.39

WHOLESOME COMIC READING ENTERTAINMENT— NEVER AN EDITORIAL GAFFE, LAPSE, OR BOOBOO! AND, AS A KID OF 10, 20, 52, I HAVE ALWAYS LIKED DELL'S COMICS FOR THE SIMPLER JOYS OF THE VERY BEST-PRODUCED SYNDICATED STRIP REPRINT BOOKS .... AND FOR BRINGING FORTH THE TALENTS OF WALT KELLY, DAN NOONAN, KEN ERNST, JOHN STANLEY, CARL BARKS, AND SCORES OF OTHER FINE CARTOONISTS, WRITERS COLORISTS (YEP, NICE OPEN AND CLEAN COLORING)· ALONG THE WAY — FUN, FANTASY, ADVENTURE, ALL OF DISNEY'S, WARNER'S, TERRY'S AND LANTZ'S MOVIE SHORT CARTOON CHARACTERS (AND THEIR FEATURE FILM ADAPTATIONS, TOO!) ... THOSE

FRED JUMBO

WERE THE SIMPLER DAYS, OF THE LATE 1930S, THROUGH THE POSTWAR YEARS. DURING THE LATTER, WHEN THE BONECRUNCHING BOOKS TOOK OVER, DELL HELD OUT LONGER THAN MOST, BEFORE CAVING IN TO THE MARKET'S DEMANDS. I'M NOT SURE THE CHOICE TO DO SO WAS CORRECT. HOWEVER AND WHATEVER — THEY DID ONE HELL OF A JOB IN GIVING US ALL THEIR BEST "FUNNYBOOKS" — AND "TARZAN", BY JESSE MARSH.

IT WAS "TARZAN" THAT OPENED UP HIS TALENTS AND MY EYES. NEW BROAD PICTURE-MAKING VISTAS ENCOMPASSING THE WHOLE OF AFRICA AND ITS PEOPLES, TRIBES, COSTUMES, CUSTOMS, TERRAIN AND WILDLIFE, PUT HIM ON THE MAP, FOR ME · IT WAS A DELIGHT TO SEE HIM GROW, WITH THE SERIES ESTABLISHED AS A HIT— EACH ISSUE WAS A SURPRISE — FOR HE BECAME ENMESHED IN HIS SUBJECT AND, WITH AN EVER GROWING PERSONAL LIBRARY ON AFRICA (RUMORED TO HAVE TOPPED 2000 VOLUMES), JESSE DOCUMENTED HIS PEOPLE AND PLACES TO A FARETHEEWELL, MORE THAN ANY OTHER "TARZAN" STRIP ARTIST HAD (BEFORE, DURING, OR AFTER HIS TENURE) —!

NO DOUBT, THE PRIMITIVE BEAUTY OF AFRICAN DESIGN/ART AFFECTED HIM DEEPLY, FOR HE FOCUSSED ON THEM AND ADAPTED STYLISTIC LINE TREATMENTS AND PATTERNS AND TEXTURES INTO HIS PANELS, LENDING GREAT PICTORIAL VARIETY TO THEM.

AS ONE REVIEWS JESSE'S "TARZAN" ISSUE TO ISSUE, ONE IS STRUCK BY HIS SWINGS FROM HEAVY, SPARSE, POSTERISH ART — TO LIGHTER, MORE DELICATELY-LINED AND RATHER BUSY STYLES! HIS WORK, I'M SURE, HAD NO LITTLE EFFECT ON THAT OF HUGO PRATT, AND CONSISTENTLY SO, AT THAT!

NOW JESSE, LIKE THE REST OF US, HAD A FAILING: ANATOMY — TARZAN'S ANATOMY, IN PARTICULAR. WHY, I DON'T KNOW — HIS WOMEN WERE CLASSIC AND LOVELY — ALL HIS APES AND FOURLEGGED ANIMALS (SAVE FOR HORSES: MY NEMESIS, TOO!) WERE WELL-DONE, AS WERE HIS POWERFUL DELINEATIONS OF BLACK TRIBESMEN AND BOYS· EVEN "BOY" WAS WELL-DRAWN — BUT TARZAN WAS, IT SEEMS, A CHORE FOR HIM! PERHAPS HIS WHITE SKIN DIDN'T LEND ITSELF TO THE DESIGN LINES, AND SHADOWS & SOLID BLACK, THAT HE WAS SO KEEN WITH WHEN DEPICTING NATIVE BLACKS, I'M NOT AT ALL SURE — YET, DESPITE THIS FLAW, HIS "TARZAN" REMAINED AS REAL AND IMPRESSIVE AS ANY I'VE SEEN IN COMICS — MORE NATURAL.

THUS, FOR ALL THE PICTORIAL RICHES HE PROVIDED US, FOR OVER 150 ISSUES, IN JUST HIS "TARZAN" SERIES, I WILL GRANT HIM, AS SHOULD WE ALL, HIS LAPSES IN DYNAMIC MUSCULATURAL DISPLAY· WHICH, BY THE WAY, SCORES OF OTHER COMIC ARTISTS CAN AND DO PROVIDE — BUT LACK ANY BIT OF JESSE'S TALENT TO DO THE REST OF THE STORYTELLING/PICTUREMAKING JOB · WHICH, IN MY EYES, TIPS THE SCALES HIS WAY —

RUNNING A SERIES AS LONG AS HE DID, IT'S REASONABLE TO ASSUME THAT BOREDOM

SET IN, NOW AND AGAIN — JESSE, HOWEVER, WAS INVESTING MORE OF HIMSELF IN THE WORK 'cm THAN OF HIS GROWING HOME LIBRARY, WHICH GAVE HIM PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION (OR HIS SUBJECTS AND, THUS, WITH THESE SIPS at THE WELL-SOURCE TO REFRESH HIM ANEW, PLUS HIS EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH TO VISUALS, HE APPARENTLY THRIVED ON THE CHALLENGES TO STAY ON TOP OF THE SITUATION HANDED HIM!

HE BECAME QUITE EXPERT, AS THE YEARS AND ISSUES PROGRESSED, ON MATTERS AFRICAN! JESSE'S SCHOOLING HAD BEEN AVERAGE, FROM WHAT I'VE BEEN ABLE TO PIECE TOGETHER, BUT AT SOME POINT EARLY ON, HE RECKONED TO EDUCATE HIMSELF FURTHER 'cm A MOST DIRECT METHOD: 'cm ACCESS TO THE COMPLEAT SET OF THE 'ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITTANICA', HE READ THE LOT, FROM A TO Z! A FIRM FOUNDATION, THAT! HE WENT ON FROM THERE QUITE NICELY, I THINK.

STUDYING JESSE'S "TARZAN", YOU'LL DISCOVER A HOST OF CURIOUS BITS OF BUSINESS OF DESIGN AND PATTERN AND TEXTURE AND 'OPEN' AREAS ABOUNDING — NOT A ONE WILLY-NILLY, EITHER. FOR INSTANCE, BEFORE LAYING OUT A PAGE, (3 ROWS DEEP, AND RATHER EVENLY SET (6 OR 7) PANELS) — JESSE WOULD CREATE AN OVERALL ABSTRACT DESIGN ON THE PAGE BLANK. ONCE DONE, HE'D BLOCK IN HIS PANELS, COPY, FIGURES, PROPS, BACKGROUNDS.. WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THAT DESIGN —!

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HIS INKING WOULD EITHER ACCENT OR DIMINISH THAT DESIGN, BY TURNS, ACCORDING TO HIS MOOD OF THE MOMENT — THUS, THIS EFFECT WILL BE EVIDENT 'cm SOME PAGES (AND BOOKS) AND NOT AT ALL 'cm OTHERS. IT'S WELL WORTH THE EFFORT TO FIND SOME EXAMPLES OF YOUR OWN.

SINCE FOLIAGE FILLED SO MUCH OF HIS PANELS, FORMING FOREGROUND PLANES AND SOLID BACKDROPS AGAINST WHICH HIS CHARACTERS PLAYED, HIS INVENTIONS WERE DIRECTED TO THEM AS WELL — HIS TREATMENT OF THEM SHIFTED, STYLE TO STYLE, FROM BOOK TO BOOK — ALWAYS INTERESTING AND INNOVATIVE.

ONE EXAMPLE: HIS USE OF RUBBER CEMENT. GIVEN AN AREA OF HEAVY FOLIAGE TO DO, HE'D RANDOMLY BRUSH IN STREAKS OF RUBBER CEMENT TO AFFECT LIMBS, TWIGS, ETC - LET IT ALL DRY — THEN INK IN THE FOLIAGE, OVER THE CEMENT STREAKS — ONCE DRY, HE'D ERASE THE CEMENT WITH A 'PICKUP' ERASER — TO EXPOSE THE WHITE PAPER — AND THE EFFECT! VOILA!

JESSE USED THIS TRICK FOR ROCK FACIAS TOO — ITS APPLICATION, TRULY, WAS UNLIMITED 'cm "TARZAN" FOR HE HAD SO MANY NON-LINEAR/NON-ARCHITECTURAL SUBJECTS TO PRESENT.

AH, BUT WHEN ARCHITECTURE WAS REQUIRED, AS IN ALL OF HIS STORIES OF 'LOST CIVILIZATIONS/LOST CITIES', WHICH TOOK A DECIDED GREEK, ROMAN, SUMERIAN OR EGYPTIAN BENT, JESSE RESEARCHED THE LOT AND DELINEATED THEM AUTHENTICALLY. HIS STAGING OF THOSE SCENES WAS EXCELLENT, TRULY. ENOUGH TO HAVE TED HAWORTH, ACADEMY AWARD-WINNING MOTION PICTURE ART DIRECTOR/PRODUCTION DESIGNER TELL ME 'cm 1958, THAT FOR MONTHS HE CHASED AFTER JESSE TO BE HIS AIDE (AND, EVENTUALLY, TO BE A PRODUCTION DESIGNER ON HIS OWN) — BUT JESSE WAS EMPHATIC! "NO!" — HAWORTH WAS LONG AWARE OF JESSE'S STAGING TALENTS 'cm "TARZAN" AND THOUGHT HIM TO BE THE MOST PIVOTAL OF ANY OF THE CROP OF CARTOONISTS 'cm COMICBOOKS AT THE TIME — STRONG, SIMPLE, BOLD, KEEN ON LIGHT AND DARK PATTERNS, SILHOUETTING (NOT 'cm THE USUAL SENSE. I'LL EXPLAIN LATER), VIEWPOINT AND CONTINUITY. A KEEN FEEL FOR MASS. HIS WORK HAD WEIGHT.

THAT ASSESSMENT ECHOED MY OWN. I'M SURE THAT WHEN JESSE WAS TOLD THIS, HIS EMBARRASSMENT GOT THE BETTER OF HIM. HE DIDN'T COTTON TO COMPLIMENTS. IN FACT HE ONCE CONFESSED TO A MUTUAL FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE: "I'M BEING ENCOURAGED TO SLOW DOWN SOME AND TICKLE UP MY WORK A BIT MORE. IF I DID THAT, IT MIGHT BE A BIT SLICKER — BUT IT'D BE NO BETTER."

IT COULD WELL BE THAT JESSE NEEDED SPEED, IN ORDER TO UNLEASH IMAGINATION AND INVENTION 'cm HIS WORK. WHICH, I BELIEVE, IS NATIVE TO JACK KIRBY'S REASONING — WHILE OTHERS REQUIRE MUCH MORE 'THINKING TIME' TO ACHIEVE THEIR SOUGHT-FOR RESULTS.

ECONOMICS ENTER INTO JESSE'S CASE,

IT IS! A CITY IN THE SANDS! PERHAPS THE STORM, IN PASSING, UNCOVERED IT!
WAIT HERE, ARGUS!
A RICH AND POWERFUL PEOPLE BUILT THESE HOMES! BUT THEY ARE NO MORE!
NO ONE HAS USED THIS BATH FOR PROBABLY HUNDREDS OF YEARS!
THIS WAS INDEED A RACE OF GREAT ARTISANS! WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN THEIR FATE?

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TOO — HIS PAGE RATES WERE IN THE $ 35 RANGE, WITH LETTERING INCLUDED, IN 1960, WHEN I ENDED MY FOUR-YEAR STINT WITH WHITMAN/WESTERN IN BEVERLY HILLS. IMAGINE HOW LOW THEY WERE IN THE 1940S, WHEN JESSE FIRST SIGNED ON! VOLUME PRODUCTION WAS A NECCESSITY, TO PAY THE BILLS.

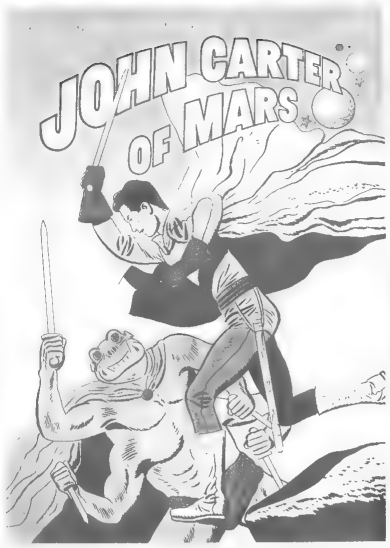
(MY ONLY 'SUCCESS' AT HIGH OUTPUT WAS WHEN I HAD BEEN DISAPPOINTED IN THE "ZORRO" SERIES' SCRIPTS. AFTER TWO OR THREE ISSUES, I SURRENDERED, AND JUST HACKED THE REST UNTIL I GOT OUT FROM UNDER!)

ASIDE FROM A SHORT BACKUP FEATURE ("BROTHERS SCHREGPEAR") IN EVERY ISSUE OF "TARZAN", HE DREW THE REST OF THE BOOK, PLUS CAME UP WITH WILDLIFE INSIDE COVERS, BACK COVERS (IF NO ADS SOLD) AND, AT THE START, FRONT COVERS, TOO! LATER, PHOTO COVERS OF CURRENT MOVIE "TARZANS" APPEARED. NOW, IF HE HAD TO, OR JUST FELT LIKE IT, JESSE COULD PICK UP A BOOK'S SCRIPT FRIDAY — AND DELIVER THE LOT MONDAY! AND THAT IS FAST! BUT, LET'S SAY THAT, GENERALLY, HE'D DO A COMPLETE BOOK (SANS THE BACKUP SHORT) IN A WEEK, WITH NO STRAIN WHATSOEVER! AND, AS STATED EARLIER, JESSE ALSO DID OCCASIONAL WILDLIFE/NATURE 'ONE SHOT' BOOKS, AND THE "TARZAN" ANNUALS/GIANTS/SPECIALS OF 64 TO 80 PAGES PER —

OH, ANOTHER STEADY ACCOUNT OF JESSE'S WAS THE SUNDAY COMIC SECTION DISNEY MOVIE ADAPTATION FEATURE WHICH WERE LINKED TO DISNEY'S LIVE ACTION FEATURES. HE HANDLED THESE FOR MANY YEARS — AND DAMNED WELL, TOO!

IN THE "JOHN CARTER OF MARS" BOOKS JESSE'S DESIGN (AND HUMOR) SENSE HELD SWAY, IN FORCE. WITH ALL THE ODD LOT BEASTIES AND ENVIRONMENTS TO CREATE, NO HOLDS BARRED, I SUSPECT HE HAD A BALL! HE DID THEM ALL QUITE WELL AND, IN HIS UNIQUE WAY, CREATING HIS VERY OWN WORLD. ALWAYS INTERESTING, DIFFERENT, SURPRISING. THEM, TOO, ARE WORTH YOUR ATTENTION.

WHEN HE WAS GIVEN MUNDANE 'HERE AND NOW' MECHANICAL SUBJECTS TO DRAW, LIKE COMMON GARDEN VARIETY CARS, TRUCKS, AIRPLANES, SHIPS, AND HELICOPTERS.. JESSE DIDN'T PUSS WITH 'EM' MUCH — NO CHALLENGE TO HIM, I'LL WAGER — YET, IN HIS PERSONAL LIFE, JESSE WAS A DYED-IN-THE-WOOL CAR BUFF AND COLLECTOR. HE'D TOOL INTO BEVERLY HILLS IN A NEW CADDY ONE MONTH — AND A MASERATI, FERRARI OR JAG', THE NEXT. WE COULDN'T KEEP UP WITH 'EM, OR HIM! YET, IN HIS WARDROBE, JESSE KEPT IT SIMPLE AND UNASSUMINGLY PRACTICAL. IN MY FOUR-YEAR TENURE AT WHITMAN/WESTERN (FROM 1956 TO 1960) I MET JESSE LESS THAN A DOZEN TIMES, ALL I RECALL OF HIS ATTIRE WAS LIGHT BLUE DENIM ZIP JACKET AND SLACKS, SPORT (OL' T') SHIRT, DECKSHOES, AND HIS DUCKBILL CAP — LOOKING MORE LIKE A GUY WHO'D JUST STEPPED OFF HIS 35 FOOTER OUT AT THE MARINA, THAN AN INLANDER FROM



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THE SEDATE COMMUNITY OF MONROVIA, 40 MILES AWAY IN THE SAN GABRIEL VALLEY! HIS THIN, WIRY FRAME WORE HIS ENSEMBLE LOOSELY — AND GAVE HIM A WISENED, GAUNT LOOK..

AT OUR FIRST CHANCE MEETING IN OUR ART DIRECTOR/EDITOR'S OFFICE, (WHERE I AT ONCE LAUDED HIM FOR HIS FINE WORK ON "TARZAN", ET AL) HE BACKED UP A STEP FROM OUR HANDCLASP, EYED ME WELL, AND SAID: "OH, YOU'RE THE GUY WHO DOES THAT SLICK NEW YORK STUFF, HMMM?" — IN A TONE THAT DEFIED PRO OR CON INTERPRETATION. TO THIS DAY, HIS MEANING IS UNKNOWN TO ME.

OUR SUCCEEDING MEETINGS, FLUKES ALL, WERE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN — BUT I TRIED ALWAYS TO SEGUE THEM INTO LUNCHES, COFFEE-KLOTSCHES, DINNERS, DRINKS, OR WHATEVER.. IN ORDER TO GET TO KNOW HIM; TALKS HOP', ETC... — TO NO AVAIL! JESSE HAD A WALL UP AND FEW OF US COULD PENETRATE IT. BUT I KEPT AT IT — AT THE TIME, I LIVED IN PASADENA, JUST MINUTES FROM HIS DIGS IN MONROVIA — SO, I PHONED HIM TO INVITE HIM OVER TO MY PLACE, OR TO MEET AT HIS! HE'D MET AND KNEW MY WIFE LONG AGO FOR SHE WAS RECEPTIONIST AT WHITMAN/WESTERN (WHERE, OF COURSE, I MET HER), SO IT'D BE A KICK FOR US TO HAVE HIM OVER FOR DINNER OR LUNCH OR COFFEE AND KICK THE GONG AROUND — AND, AT LAST, HE AGREED, THEN

CANCELLED, THEN POSTPONED, CANCELLED AGAIN, UNTIL IT WAS CLEAR that HE JUST WASN'T ABOUT TO BE COLLEAGUE/NEIGHBOR ... SO I LET GO...

REGRETFULLY SO — BECAUSE I, VERY MUCH, WANTED TO BECOME FRIENDS WITH the MAN I ADMIRED and RESPECTED. CHUCK MCKIMSON, OUR ART DIRECTOR/EDITOR WASN'T SURPRISED. CHUCK WAS WARMLY ACCEPTED and LIKED by ALL, by JESSE, TOO, OF COURSE — BUT EVEN CHUCK COULDN'T GET BEYOND JESSE'S PRIVATE BARRIER ... ALWAYS CIVIL, POLITE, RESPONSIVE in MATTERS of WORK AT HAND... BUT NO FURTHER...

JESSE DID, AT ONE TIME, CONGREGATE WITH FELLOW CARTOONISTS AT A WEEKLY LIFE SKETCH CLASS, HERE, in L.A.— and TOO, AT A LONG DEFUNCT FRENCH BOITE, the "CAFÉ de PARIS", ON SUNSET & LA BREA, for DINNER, DRINKS and COMRADERIE — BUT that ALL HAPPENED BEFORE MY ENTREÉ on the SCENE — DAMN IT!

JESSE'S WORK THROUGH HIS YEARS at DELL COMICS EXHIBITED INFLUENCES of FEW OTHER CARTOONISTS.. IF ANY, THAT of MILTON CANIFF, AT LEAST in SOME of HIS RENDITIONS of TARZAN'S FACE (WHICH CHANGED ALMOST AS OFTEN AS the SCREEN'S TARZANS DID) and IN HIS USE of BLACK, OR FOLIAGE, TEXTURING of WALLS, ROCKS ... UNTIL JESSE FOUND HIS OWN WAY and KEPT TO THEM, WISELY. HE DID NOT RELY on OTHERS' INTERPRETATIONS of "TARZAN" AT ALL! WHATEVER HIS APPRECIATION for the LIKES of FOSTER, MAXON, HOGARTH, BARRY OR CELARDO, THEIR RENDITIONS WERE NOT ECHOED in HIS OWN.

HIS METHOD of WORKING WAS SUCH that HE DREW LITTLE MORE than LIGHT OUTLINE ROUGHS of HIS FIGURES, CHOOSING TO DRAW WITH PEN and BRUSH in HIS INKING STAGES (I'LL HAZARD a GUESS that HE LETTERED FROM HIS SCRIPT DIRECTLY ONTO HIS PAGE WITHOUT GUIDELINES, TOO). ON OCCASION, HE VARIED THIS, TO INCORPORATE SOME NEW, UNTRIED CONCEPT that CAUGHT HIS FANCY, and REQUIRED MORE 'MEAT' in HIS VISUALIZATION OR PENCILLING STAGES — OR DESIGNING THOSE FULL PAGE ABSTRACTIONS.

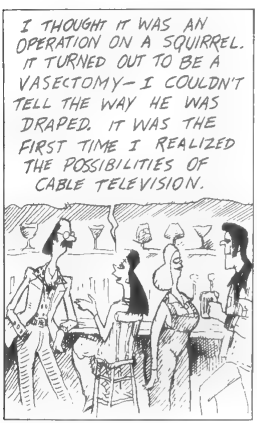
A PARTING SHOT — SOME YEARS AGO, A RATHER POMPOUS COLLEAGUE of MINE (POPULAR in the FIELD of COMICS) ASSAILED JESSE MARSH'S "TARZAN" in a WINK by UTTERING: "I DISMISS HIS WORK, OUT of HAND..." ... FUNNY, BUT I'VE HAD GOOD CAUSE TO FEEL the VERY SAME ABOUT HIM and HIS WORK, EVER SINCE! "THERE ARE NONE SO BLIND as THOSE WHO WILL NOT SEE". MY COLLEAGUE SAW NOT! I HOPE THAT, UPON DIGESTING THIS RAMBLING TESTIMONIAL to the RATHER QUIET and QUITE DIFFERENT, QUALITATIVE ARTISTIC FARE OFFERED by JESSE MARSH in ALL HIS ENDEAVORS, YOU WILL TAKE the TROUBLE to AVAIL YOURSELF of the COMICS MENTIONED — and READ HIS STORIES, TO ENJOY HIS ART! YOU'LL FIND MORE THERE than YOU MIGHT HAVE EXPECTED, from a FIRST SUPERFICIAL SKIMMING.

OH, ABOUT 'SILHOUETTING'... IT IS A TERM USED TO DEFINE the STAGING of CHARACTERS WITH IN a SCENE (OR PANEL) in SUCH a CLEAR MANNER that EVEN IF OVERLAPPED by OTHER FIGURES, THEIR ACTION and/or IDENTITY CAN STILL BE READ/SEEN. THE MASTERS in CARTOONING, FILMS, ILLUSTRATION, PAINTING, and EVERY VISUAL ART KNEW ITS VALUE, USED IT CONSISTENTLY — IT IS ESSENTIAL in GOOD COMPOSITION in ART. IN COMICS, in PARTICULAR, WITH ITS REDUCED PICTURE SIZES — CLARITY IS a MUST! BUT YOU'LL LOOK HARD TO FIND IT IN the COMICS OF TODAY — FEW CARTOONISTS are EVEN AWARE of SILHOUETTING and WHAT IT MEANS to a PICTURE OR HOW TO USE IT!

JESSE MARSH KNEW IT VERY WELL — HIS WORK DEMONSTRATES THIS, PANEL and PAGE! LOOK FOR IT — YOU'LL COME TO KNOW ITS ADVANTAGES, and SEEK IT OUT, ELSEWHERE, PERHAPS FUTILELY — FOR IT PERSONIFIES SIMPLICITY and AWARENESS — IN ALL ARTFORMS! IT MEANS CONTRAST and CLARITY.

JESSE WAS TRUE to ITS BEST USES, and to HIS SUBJECT, and to HIMSELF!

REVIEWS


I THOUGHT IT WAS AN OPERATION ON A SQUIRREL. IT TURNED OUT TO BE A VASECTOMY—I COULDN'T TELL THE WAY HE WAS DRAPED. IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I REALIZED THE POSSIBILITIES OF CABLE TELEVISION.

Stan Mack's Real Life Funnies by Stan Mack. G.P. Putnam's Sons. 156 pages. No price given.

"There's so many cuckoos running around loose," sighs an old man in the pages of *Stan Mack's Real Life Funnies*. It's a statement the book proves to be all too true, and it seems to be Mack's calling to chase after and dutifully chronicle every last cuckoo. And can he find them! Mack's haunts have included sex shops ("He chained his wife to the toilet bowl...and discovered that he didn't have the key..."), rock concerts ("You can sequence the input, but if it's digital rather than analogue...it's a completely autonomous mother."), and occult festivals ("*Fat* is in your *aura*! *Tonate* yourself with a red light for ten minutes a day and you'll get *thin*.") Looking for cuckoos? This is a regular *Audubon Guide*.

The method Mack uses to report on the madness is a simple one. Armed with pad and pencil, he visits parties, office meetings, conventions, anyplace he thinks oddballs will congregate. Surreptitiously, he begins stalking the elusive "line", a quote from a person that tells a lot more about the speaker than he or she would ever want to reveal (amazing how your notion of someone will change when they come out with a pearl like, "We have a second school registration in the fall when the Puerto Ricans wake up and say, oh, school!"). Sated with the scene, Mack returns home to transcribe the conversations in comic strip form, attempting to convey a sense of the event he has attended. Smile! You're on Candid Comics!

Mack usually succeeds quite well, instilling in his work a sense of place and a view of humanity that is greater than even he'd bargained for. Particularly touching is his comic strip drawn from his experience at a Sun Myung Moon rally at Yankee Stadium. Mack depicts a pair of proud parents gleefully getting a snapshot of their recently "converted" son. "Bob, take his picture in uniform," says a jubilant Mom. Next panel, a bewildered father mutters a line that could've been lifted from *Invasion of the Body Snatchers:* "The place is still full of people that...aren't us."

How does Mack manage to extract such toothsome wisdom and yet pass among his prey unnoticed? In the book's introduction, he offers his own Eavesdropper's Textbook: "Dress to blend in quietly. Get to the destination in enough time to case the joint. It helps to be not too tall, not too short, not too dark, not too light, not too handsome, not too ugly, not too old and not too young. All of these I am, and it finally paid off...Smile and keep your ears open. Find the men's room (always good for a line), find coffee and food...look for a few convenient corners in which to hide. Learn to walk backwards in order to get closer to groups. Learn to stand in the middle of a mob and like it. And finally, learn to change direction suddenly in order to follow a good line floating by..."

Mack apparently hasn't let too many lines float past him, and that brings up an interesting question about this technique: Are the "lines" enough? How much editing has to be done to a conversation before it is pared down to the best "lines?" Can it be edited too much? That is, when can his victims rightly claim they were "quoted out of context?" Are ten or twelve panels enough to accurately reflect an event? Would the event be recreated more authentically if the *Village Voice*, where these strips first appeared, gave Mack the entire page? Two entire pages? *Ten* entire pages?

Coincidentally, two of the vignettes here collected are concerned with comics themselves. One depicts Harvey Kurtzman doing his best to interview a laconic Robert Crumb at the School of Visual Arts. "Why're you here, R. Crumb?" Harvey asks genially. "I don't know—these things happen...yawn ...," is the reply. After the show, Crumb is besieged by art students whose own work make Crumb look like Kate Greenaway. The other vignette records a comic book convention at the Statler-Hilton. Such comments float to the surface as, "Zip-A-Tone is rampant in John's work," "We'll never see the likes of the Giant Behemoth again," and "The sniper missed Doc Savage because everything is constructed so it's five inches to the left of where it really is." The piece makes butterfly collecting look damned attractive.

Stan Mack is at his best when applying his technique to reportage, and his pieces on the 1976 New York Democratic Convention and the Patty Hearst trial are groundbreakers. Jimmy Carter and Jerry Brown's neologisms seem even more nebulous in comic strip context. There'd also unwitting advice to young politicos from the mouth of a female delegate: "I said I was uncommitted, and Brown gave me a kiss!" The crowd "Waiting for Seats at the Hearst Trial" unknowingly get right to the heart of the atmosphere under which that trial was conducted. "Patty draws wherever she plays," says one. From another, "Where were you at Lana Turner's trial or at Malcolm X?" Another outstanding piece, "The Day the City Council Tried to Give Itself a Raise", excellently contrasts the "mad-as-hell-and-I'm-not-gonna-take-it-anymore" fever of the audience with the Council's "let-'em-eat-cake" indifference. When criticized for wanting a raise, an irate Council member asks, "What's *your* salary?" The member is told, "$9,400," to which she replies, "I applaud you. I couldn't live in the city for twice that!" "Some have to!" counters a voice in the crowd.

Mack's chief weaponry in creating these slices of life are his keen ear for dialogue, and his often deceptive draftsmanship. At first glance, his work appears extemporaneous and hurried, as if Mack were rushing to complete the comic before he forgot all the dialogue. Closer inspection reveals that each of his cartoon victims has a set of gestures, facial tics and clothing style that is unique to them, pinpointing a "type" we've all met *somewhere* before. This careful observation is taken to the hilt in his strip "Short Takes", in which the way a young woman draws on her cigarette, slouches in her director's chair and crosses her legs get across more about her attitude toward her life than her words ever could. A more recent effort, "Holy Hopping Hormones!" (not collected in this volume), attempts to do something similar. As the heroine discusses her sex life, Mack draws her in the process of making tea for a guest. We never get to see her *face*, though, as Mack has chosen to describe this young woman in terms of the possessions she owns; the knick-knacks on her shelf, the books in her library, the Mickey Mouse cap that hangs from a nail in the wall. "Lines?" Who needs "lines?" Let's have a mime version of *Real Life Funnies!*

One minor cavil I can raise deals with Mack's choice of subject matter. As you read above, most of the strips detail the odd and offbeat. In a city like New York, that's not exactly hard to spot. In fact, subcultures thrive in New York, and subcultures like UFOlogists, fervent faith healers and wargamers are easy to laugh at. They're overly in-bred, and their dedication (read: fanaticism) toward their interests already seems ridiculous to any outsider. Plus, their own brand of "professional jargon" makes nearly any statement they make seem foolish when "reported verbatim." It's reminiscent of would-be photographers who shoot black-and-white roll after roll of bag ladies and Bowery bums. Shazam! Instant Poignancy. What I'm saying is that these are all easy targets. We need Mack and his pad and pencil at City Hall, not the next Star Trek Convention.

But that's a small beef. *Real Life Funnies* is a solid marriage of journalism and the comics medium, and Mack deserves your attention as one of the form's new pioneers.

JOEY CAVALIERI

Hadashi No Gen by Keiji Nakazawa. Available in Japanese in multiple volume paperback sets of approximately 275 pages each volume.

Gen of Hiroshima No. 1. Educomics. 48 pages. $1.50. (Available from the publisher, Box 40246, San Francisco, Ca. 94140; add 15¢ postage).

Barefoot Gen Vols. 1 and 2. Project Gen, Tokyo. 285 and 340 pages, respectively. (Available from The War Resistors League, 339 Lafayette St., New York, N.Y. 10012. The price is $4 per volume plus 81¢ postage. Also available from Educomics at the address above.)

Hadashi No Gen (the G is hard, as in give) is an incredibly long and detailed comic book story based on creator Keiji Nakazawa's own experience as a seven year old child in Hiroshima during and after World War II. Nakazawa began serializing the story in the late sixties and is still continuing today to unfold Gen's tale. The story runs well over 1,200 pages so far, about half of which is available in English.

Gen is a very difficult book to write about; it is a book with a message. How does one pass critical judgement once an artist has made the decision to render such a horrifying personal experience in so exhaustive a scale? One can only commend Nakazawa for having the courage to document an event that others who have lived through have tried to forget, but which is dangerous for the world to forget.

The English versions of *Gen* are published by very socially committed publishers. *Barefoot Gen* is published by a group in Japan who have contributed their time and funds to share *Gen* with an English speaking audience. *Gen of Hiroshima* is one of a series of titles published by Leonard Rifas that deal with energy and anti-nuclear concerns.

In Japan, however, *Hadashi No Gen* does not have these alternate culture, limited-press connotations. There, *Gen* was first serialized in the children's comic *Shukan Shonen Jampa*, Japan's largest weekly comic, and one of the largest weekly publications in the world, with a circulation of over 2 million. Subsequent multiple volume paperback editions have brought the total readership of *Gen* in Japan to over 5 million. Gen's story has also been made into a two part film. (Nakazawa signed over the film rights without taking any payment. Later, he learned to his regret that he had signed away any rights to have the films shown free to religious groups.)

Gen's mainstream acceptance in Japan is a reminder that there are cultural differences which should be borne in mind when reading the book. One difference, certainly, is that comics are incredibly popular in Japan, far more so than in any other country, both among children and adults. Long serializations that are later published as multiple volume paperbacks are quite common.

The Japanese comics have developed certain conventions that are disconcerting to American readers (including, at times *Gen*'s American publishers). One is the style of drawing endemic to almost all Japanese children's comics, which can only be described as "modified AstroBoy," and the standardized shorthand of certain body positions and facial expressions (quite different from the equally standardized American counterparts). Another is the story structure of Japanese comics, which frequently alternate scenes of interpersonal violence with tearful emotional scenes that to American readers have decided soap opera overtones.

There is no denying that Nakazawa's narrative is limited by some of these conventions. In terms of his technique, he does not try to rise above or break away from these standard formulas. Even within the "modified AstroBoy" school there are superior draftsmen and in the adult Japanese comics where a wide variety of styles is permitted, there is often very exciting narrative experimentation and incredibly beautiful draftsmanship. (Nakazawa's art looks cruder than it actually is in the Educomics edition, which must be at least six generations away from the original art, having been picked up from the Project Gen edition, with pointless tone overlays added.) In *Gen*, one suspects that even elements pleasing to the western eye, such as the image of the sun that is used for transitions, are merely conventions. Within each episode of Volume One of *Barefoot Gen* one also detects strong elements of narrative formula—physical conflict between good guys and bad guys.

In fact, although *Gen* is described as autobiographical, one tends to feel t' . basically true circumstances are given a highly fictional veneer in Volume One. The Japanese are traditionally very restrained and have been trained to suspress their emotions. In their art these restraints are broken loose. So, while it is not surprising to find Gen actually biting off the fingers of his adversaries in a comic book, it is very unlikely that this occurred in real life, even during the pressures of wartime Japan.

Gen's father's stand against the Japanese militaristic society in the closing days of the war was practically unique. Canby Jones (who helped establish the Peace Center Library, a collection of literature about the Japanese atomic disaster, at Wilmington College, Ohio, where he is a Professor of Philosophy and Religion) hazards a guess that there couldn't have been more than a dozen people in all of Japan who would have dared to resist the war effort the way Gen's father did. Surely, the best proof that Nakazawa's own father was a direct model for Gen's father is Nakazawa himself, who has spent so many years of his life recreating these most painful memories of his childhood. Of those who lived through the blasts at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, very few have cared to record for posterity what those events were like. That Nakazawa did suggests that his father led the way.

Leonard Rifas' headline on the back of *Gen of Hiroshima* reads, "Nakazawa did not draw this comic book to make you feel guilty." Obviously so, since he was writing for a Japanese audience. In fact, the accusing finger in Volume One of *Barefoot Gen* is pointed at the militarist leaders of Japan, who used worship of the emperor and ubiquitous propaganda techniques, especially in the schoolroom, to create an all pervasive fight-to-the-death mentality.

Volume One's meandering narrative is at pains to show every element of this militarism, from Gen's family being required to dance up a storm on sidewalk chalk figures of Roosevelt and Churchill, to the personal story of an unwilling kamikaze pilot. The various effects of this militarism, from widespread hunger to the fascism of the authorities are also shown.

Nakazawa's great strength, in fact, is his epic concept, his weaving together of so many elements, events and characters into an endless narrative that eventually becomes overpowering.

Note that I have several times specified that the above comments apply to Volume One of *Barefoot Gen*, which, until the last twenty pages, deals with the months prior to the close of the war. At that point the bomb is dropped, and Nakazawa then devotes over 200 pages to Gen's life during the first few days after the blast, showing horrors with a multitude of detail that could only be recreated by one who lived through them, sparing the reader nothing.

Frankly, the only way I was able to read this sequence was to glance at it for short periods of time over several weeks until I became

sufficiently acclimatized to the images to actually sit down and read it. Nakazawa's cartoony style provides less distancing than one would expect. His diagramatic depiction of flesh dripping from walking figures, or of bloated bodies exploding in the river, actually cuts through the reader's mind to lay bare the *concept* of the depicted horror as effectively as any detailed rendering could.

The very enormity of the disaster resists any cultural formula. One senses that Nakazawa drew far more directly on his own experiences in this sequence, and that, having done so, he continued to develop a more realistic storyline in his postwar episodes. Nakazawa's control of the form and of his story obviously grew over the months he worked on his epic.

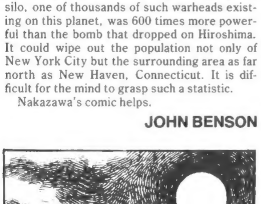
How is it that a comic depicting such horrifying events became so popular in Japan? To say that Japan is a nation crazy about comics and that their pseudo-historical comics epics have inured them to violence does not explain the phenomenon.

Though the threat of nuclear war has existed for over 35 years, only Japan has had to suffer its effects. This unique circumstance gives the Japanese a different perspective. According to Canby Jones, the military tradition is still respected there, and certainly many Japanese, particularly in the North, have no greater concern about nuclear war than the rest of the world. But, he says, the country as a whole is much more aware of nuclear history. To give a good example: several years ago a small book titled *Sadako and the Thousand Cranes* by Eleanor Coerr was published in Japan. It told the true story of a 15 year old girl who died of lukemia—a second generation bomb victim who believed that she would regain her health if she could only fold 1,000 origami paper cranes, each representing a prayer for peace and long life. She died after folding only 750. The book became a best seller and the story is well known throughout Japan. Folding crane societies have been formed by schoolchildren all over the country, and the book was instrumental in forcing the Japanese government to finally pay the medical bills of the atomic bomb survivors. The southern, Hiroshima-Nagasaki, area, particularly, has a special awareness of nuclear dangers. The prefectures (states) in which these cities lie, and two neighboring ones, have adopted a peace studies program for all their public schools.

In September 1980, a Titan II missle silo exploded in Damascus, Arkansas. It was routinely reported that the undetonated nuclear warhead which was blown out of the silo, one of thousands of such warheads existing on this planet, was 600 times more powerful than the bomb that dropped on Hiroshima. It could wipe out the population not only of New York City but the surrounding area as far north as New Haven, Connecticut. It is difficult for the mind to grasp such a statistic.

Nakazawa's comic helps.

JOHN BENSON



SOON THE FLOWER IS BORN
MAKE SURE YA HOLD HER RIGHT - BLABETTE
OI SHE GOT GERMS!
FANNY DON'T BE A SNAK & EAT DINNER ALREADY!
IS SHE SHOULD GROW UP & MARRY A DOCTOR WITH GOD'S HELP!

Power Pak Comics, by Aline Kominsky-Crumb. Kitchen Sink Enterprises. 36 pages. $1.00.

Aline Kominsky's formal and technical achievements as a comics artist have gone largely unnoticed, partly because of the candor—unprecedented even in undergrounds—of her autobiographical revelations, partly because of the startling originality of her visual and narrative style. Although the directions and precision with which Kominsky expresses intense feeling are obvious proof of her artistic intelligence and control, the Bunch's "tortured tales" have been routinely mispraised as primitive artifacts or dismissed out of hand as deliberately crude and gross. To say that Kominsky is a conscious artist at all seems presumptuous. To assert that her comics are serious high art sounds wildly excessive. The ace up my critical sleeve is Kominsky's stunning first solo book: in my opinion, *Power Pak* establishes Aline Kominsky as one of the greatest artists in the history of comics.

"Blabette & Arnie," *Power Pak*'s 17-page opening piece, is the most fully dramatized comic book story I have ever read. It is also a summation—an anthology, almost—of Kominsky's previous work; themes and images from earlier pieces reappear, as do many of Kominsky's distinctive stylistic innovations. The most important of these is the plot design of "Blabette & Arnie," a more elaborate and fluid version of the sandwich-like structure of "Oh Camp So Dear" (*Lemme Outa Here*). In both stories Kominsky faced a daunting problem: how to recreate the simultaneity of associated memories in an extended comics narrative. Her solution, which she first hit upon in "Oh Camp So Dear," has been to "repress" the climax—as the mind represses painful memories—by burying it in the middle of the story and surrounding it on either side with layers of related incidents which are, by comparison, easier to bear. "Oh Camp So Dear" created a unity of dramatic effect possible only in comics: every panel is suffused with the power of the centrally-placed climactic scene. "Blabette & Arnie" has a similar combination of lucidity of structure and passionate depth of feeling, but this time Kominsky's flamboyantly histrionic imagination is turned outward and focussed upon the lives of her parents.

The first six pages of "Blabette & Arnie," which take us through the early lives, courtship and marriage of the Bunch's parents and end during the post-war boom years when the Bunch is about two years old, are a remarkable feat of imaginative reconstruction and projection on Kominsky's part. Except for scattered anecdotes picked up from her parents and grandparents (some of which have surely found their way into the captions verbatim), Kominsky has had to rely on fantasy images of her parents' youth which have evidently been taking shape in her mind since she was a very little girl. Some of these (nine-year-old Arnie promising his widowed mother that he'll "take care of" her) resemble photographs; others (Arnie's first meeting with Blabette's parents; the engagement ring scene) are like episodes from an imaginary film or play. These sequences are interspersed with panels drawn from family-album snapshots, a device Kominsky first used in "Mondo Condo" (*Arcade* #5).

The captions above and below the snapshot panels take on a deadpan irony and bitterness when read in conjunction with the images, but they are basically, like the photographs from which the panels were drawn, the official version of the history of Kominsky's family. Panel 1 is visual proof that Blabette's family "even had money during the Depression," just as panel 3 proves that Arnie "had a wild time in Paree." The Bunch's version is provided by the copious word and thought balloons and by the visual irony of the breakdown: panel 1 really proves that Blabette was a selfish spoiled brat; panel 3, that Arnie's "wild time" was a temporary, and purely geographical, escape from the clutches of his mother. The first row of panels on page 4 shows the camera transforming real life into the decorous iconography of family history: in panel 1, Blabette and Arnie obey the unseen photographer's command to "smiyule" and become the eternally "happy couple" of their wedding portrait; in panel 2, Blabette warns Arnie to "make sure the hotel's in the background" as she poses for a honeymoon snapshot.

The lavish attention to visual detail and nuances of speech in the opening section of "Blabette & Arnie" is almost operatic in its cumulative effect. Kominsky organizes her material with the sure feeling for improvised pacing and structure of a practiced dancer or musician. Concise statement of theme followed by rapid expansion and development; exposition through parallelism, repetition and contrast; alternation between solos and duets, dissonances and harmonies; apparent resolutions that come abruptly undone: the formidable array of narrative techniques seems both spontaneous and exactly, inevitably right. By the time we get to the last panel on page 6 we know the Bunch's parents so well that we search instinctively, as we take in the "happy family" tableau, for the loaded shotgun hanging above the fireplace.

What follows is the tragic history of the Bunch's little brother (page 7), a ferocious shouting match between Blabette and Arnie (page 8), and the young Bunch listening at her bedroom wall as her father rapes her mother in the next room (page 9). Structurally, this 3-page sequence corresponds to the scene in "Oh Camp So Dear" in which Arnie orders the Bunch's black boyfriend out of the house at gunpoint: everything that has gone before suddenly leaps into focus; everything that follows—the attempt to go on as though nothing had happened—is a brutal transition to

a world of lost illusions. A crucial difference between the two stories is that the Bunch enters "Blabette & Arnie" as a conscious character only at the beginning of the climax and that she is present more as an observer and commentator than as a means of advancing the action.

The last eight pages of "Blabette & Arnie" are a negative, inverted repetition of the opening section. Arnie returns, this time for good, to his passive role. Blabette becomes a successful businesswoman. The Bunch, armed with her bitter knowledge that "the adult world is really grim," reads Tolstoy and waits for her childhood to be over. The end comes abruptly: Arnie dies of cancer; Blabette, still a young woman, sits alone at her desk and stares into space.

Kominsky's use of pattern and design as narrative devices—now binding groups of panels together as visual units, now isolating single panels as iconic images—is ideally suited to her theatrical approach to comics. The breakdown of pages 8 and 9, which can be read panel by panel or seen as a double-page spread composed of three simultaneously present sections, is a spectacular example of Kominsky's ability to dramatize her material *as comics*. Individual panels (Aaron weeping as he folds his dead friend's pajamas; Arnie's callous mother throwing herself on her son's grave) punctuate the rapid visual and verbal flow with tableau-like moments of poignancy and stillness. But isolated examples can give no idea of the sustained emotional intensity and richness of texture of "Blabette & Arnie." by embodying a theme of ultimate seriousness in unforgettable words and images, Kominsky has created the first great family tragedy in comics since Art Spiegelman's "Prisoner on the Heil Planet."

I suspect that the unsigned and undated "Valerie Feldman," which combines the stylistic deftness and audacity of Kominsky's recent work with an odd detachment from its subject, is an early piece in which Kominsky leapfrogged herself aesthetically. Everything conspires to keep us at a distance from Valerie: the tightly drawn long-shot panels, the concise two-way breakdown on page 2, the icily perceptive ending. In this funny, bitter, elegant story Kominsky sees her life from the outside and persuades us of the accuracy of her vision. She was not to do so again (assuming that my hunch about "Valerie" is right) until she had gone through her "repulsively revealing" period and been forced, in the process, to reinvent comics from the ground up.

Has Kominsky been influenced by other comics artists, her famous husband in particular? "Dancing Bunch and the Birth of Mr. Bunch" raises these questions without mentioning comics at all, and the implicit answers are no, and no. The Bunch's girlhood idol was Ballanchine, not Biro, and Mr. Bunch turns out to be a pint-sized version of Arnie at his most hard-boiled and self-deluding, not (as he seemed to be in *Arcade* #6) a Mr. Snoid spin-off. In loosely Freudian terms, Mr. Bunch is a variant of the omnipotent father-figure, the demon of the "have-to" imprisoned in the soul of every compulsive overachiever. His cigar, I am happy to report, is only a cigar (probably borrowed from Joe, the Bunch's likeable and successful grandfather and, one remembers, the real-life Arnie's boss). Once his categorical imperative—"Get married!"—has been obeyed, the Bunch is free to resume her dancing, this time for fun, and Mr. Bunch is exiled to the girls' locker room of her unconscious.

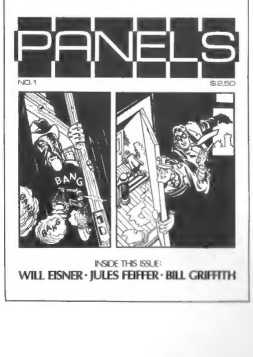
"Dancing Bunch/Mr. Bunch" is a cheerfully provocative declaration of Kominsky's independence as a woman and an artist, hence the pointedly casual, almost throwaway allusion to her marriage to Robert Crumb. But there is nothing casual about her signing the story, as she also signed "Blabette's Best Customer" and the book as a whole, with her married name. If Dancing Bunch can give Mr. Bunch the kiss-off, Aline Kominsky-Crumb can do the same with the trendy, sanctimonious posing that has often passed for serious feminism in underground comics. One reads "The Bunch Has a Friend" and finds it compassionate, honest, funny and completely unforced. One wonders—but not for long—how many "collectives" would have given it their *imprimatur* in 1975, the year it was drawn.

"Blabette's Best Customer" matches a self-confident, grown-up Bunch against a late-70's Blabette who's still going strong. The battle is waged with an articulateness and gusto that does credit to both sides (Blabette's "It was just bad timing, I guess . . ." would make a fitting epigraph for *Power Pak*) and ends in an affectionate draw. Rick Snitnarf, Blabette's groovy, go-getting best customer, is hopelessly outclassed: Blabette makes her sale without even trying and the Bunch, who's been monitoring her own "surveillance system" since 1958, sees through Rich immediately. Kominsky' parting shot at the world of Rick Snitnarf is "Yusef the Hairsucker," a two-pager about the Bunch and her cat which will, I hope, make Kominsky's very personal and frequently alarming sense of humor accessible to readers who have been puzzled or scandalized by previous examples ("Why," the artist was once asked by an interviewer, "are you proud of being gross, anyhow?").

What generalization can one make about a book that begins with the comics equivalent of *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and ends with Yusef the cat sucking on a wig as he pees in the toilet? Kominsky has developed from a compulsively honest scrutinizer of her own life into the most histrionic artist ever to work in comics. Like a great actress immersing herself in a series of roles, she *becomes* every one of her characters. Rick Snitnarf is a memorable figure because he is an individuated, intensely realized dramatic creation, not that perennially safe underground target, the Straight Villain. Kominsky's comics seen performed rather than drawn and this—not any imagined lack of skill—explains why they resist panel-by-panel exegesis. *Power Pak* is the most thorough demonstration to date that the art of Aline Kominsky approaches the capaciousness and fluidity of life itself.

WILLIAM MASON

Space considerations prevent our running a review of Raw, *an important new magazine published and edited by Art Spiegelman and Francoise Mouly, a situation we hope to rectify in the next issue of* Panels. *Meanwhile, we suggest ordering a copy of* Raw *#1 from Raw Books, 27 Greene Street, New York, N.Y. 10013. The price is $3.50 plus $1 for postage (first class mail). The second issue, same price, should be available by the time this reaches print.*



If you enjoyed this issue of *Panels*, you will want to read these other publications:

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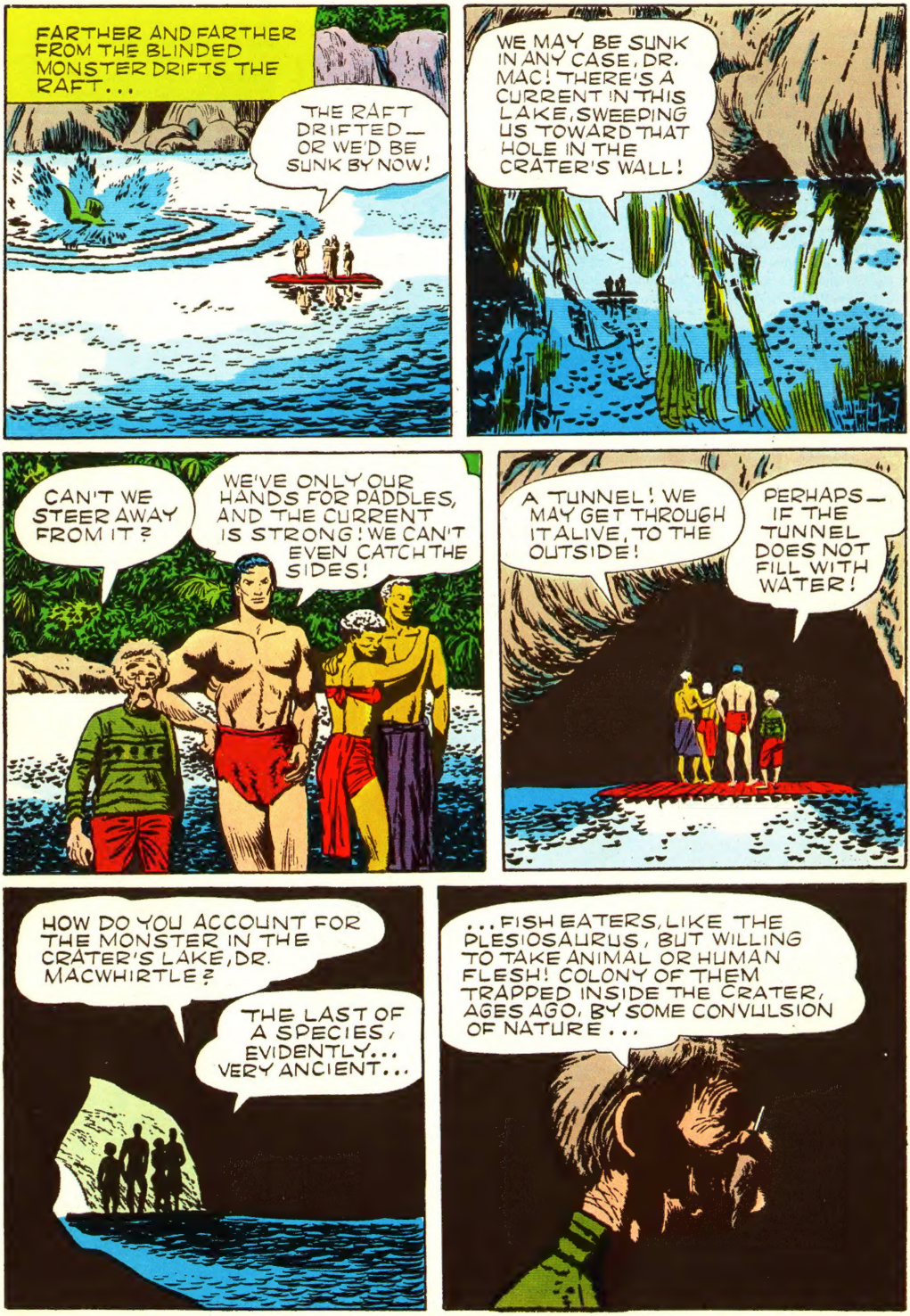
FARTHER AND FARTHER FROM THE BLINDED MONSTER DRIFTS THE RAFT...
THE RAFT DRIFTED— OR WE'D BE SUNK BY NOW!
WE MAY BE SUNK IN ANY CASE, DR. MAC! THERE'S A CURRENT IN THIS LAKE, SWEEPING US TOWARD THAT HOLE IN THE CRATER'S WALL!
CAN'T WE STEER AWAY FROM IT?
WE'VE ONLY OUR HANDS FOR PADDLES, AND THE CURRENT IS STRONG! WE CAN'T EVEN CATCH THE SIDES!
A TUNNEL! WE MAY GET THROUGH IT ALIVE, TO THE OUTSIDE!
PERHAPS— IF THE TUNNEL DOES NOT FILL WITH WATER!
HOW DO YOU ACCOUNT FOR THE MONSTER IN THE CRATER'S LAKE, DR. MACWHIRTLE?
THE LAST OF A SPECIES, EVIDENTLY... VERY ANCIENT...
...FISH EATERS, LIKE THE PLESIOSAURUS, BUT WILLING TO TAKE ANIMAL OR HUMAN FLESH! COLONY OF THEM TRAPPED INSIDE THE CRATER, AGES AGO, BY SOME CONVULSION OF NATURE...

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